

Mia Couto and Mozambique: The Renegotiation of the National  
Narrative and Identity in an African Nation

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## ABSTRACT

Mia Couto and Mozambique: The Renegotiation of the National  
Narrative and Identity in an African Nation  
(Under the direction of Professor Monica Rector)

Mia Couto is a Mozambican author that problematizes questions of identity, inclusion and exclusion, and the consequences of the quest for modernity in Mozambique. Couto's work is an urgently needed constructive effort to project an alternative model of Mozambican identity.

This work is a critical interpretation of Couto's work and my approach is framed within a Cultural Studies perspective. In Mozambique, forms of neo-colonial oppression still linger and guide the political decision-making process, excluding subjects that do not conform to Western visions of progress and modernity. Couto's literature, language and narrative style enable him to voice the emotions, frustrations, and the triumphs of Mozambican peoples. All of his texts serve to represent the local lifestyle and resistance to neo-colonial acts of authority and oppression. Couto preserves cultural sites within which collective memory,

identity and action are integrated, and which generate representation of marginalized discourses and identities.

The fact that Couto is a white Mozambican raises questions of authority and authenticity that the author successfully resolves. The author writes processes of transculturation and reterritorialization that create a new linkage between culture and space for the racial minorities in the country.

Couto removes the Mozambican revolution from the center of the identity paradigm, recovers Mozambican traditions belief systems, exerts Mozambican agency over the Portuguese language through cultural inscription, and finally frees the identity paradigm from racial implications, allowing for the inclusion of racial and ethnic diversity in the national narrative and identity.

To my great-aunt Lucinda, who I miss dearly. She never had a formal education; she lived her entire life in the same little village in the center of Portugal. She was the one who taught me, by example, the eternal force of tolerance and acceptance; who taught me the virtues of generosity and flexibility; but who also taught me to stand up for myself, to never accept injustice and most of all, to make my voice heard when others cannot speak. Her life was a celebration of simplicity and humanity and I love her! Thank you for being with me throughout this process.

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## Introduction

Mia Couto is a short-story writer, novelist poet, and journalist from Mozambique and he is regarded as one of the most significant African authors writing in Portuguese. Couto's work draws heavily on the speech pattern's of Mozambicans and on themes of traditional oral storytelling. His narrative subjects and traditional myths join everyday life events of postwar life in Mozambique. Couto blurs boundaries between the living and the dead, the individual and the community, and men and women.

This work will demonstrate how Couto renegotiates Mozambican identity and national narrative by revisiting and criticizing Mozambican historical and political discourse and cultural practices from the perspective of everyday life experience. I am interested in examining the multiplicity of new connections/definitions that Couto creates for what it means to be Mozambican. I will focus on how his conceptions recover marginalized narratives that collide with and challenge traditional ideas of Mozambican national identity that represent an "official" version of Mozambican narrative.



Stories have the power to shape nations, and many formerly colonized people have used narrative in a variety of social, political and performative contexts to renegotiate memory and represent their silenced past and present. I will analyze what informs Couto's perspective and interpretation of the society in which he lives. Specifically, how his texts present Mozambicans' daily struggles, yet are still influenced by the way of thinking that is more a product of an elite or power structure. Couto's literature forces Mozambicans to expand their repertoire of their identity to include contradictions and conflicts. Mozambican identity in Couto's literature becomes a product of tensions between race, class, ethnicity, gender, etc. rather than a simple, singular experience.

António Emílio Leite Couto, Mia Couto, was born to Portuguese parents in August 5, 1955 in the Mozambican city of Beira. He published his first poems in the newspaper "Notícias da Beira" when he was 14. He speaks Portuguese and Chissena, an indigenous African language. In 1972 he moved to Maputo to begin medical studies but did not finished because of his involvement in the independence struggle. In 1974 he started a career in journalism. He was director of the Mozambique Information Agency (AIM), editor of the weekly magazine

"Tempo," and later editor of the newspaper "Notícias." In 1985 he returned to the Universidade de Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo and completed a B.A. in Biology. In 1992, he led the effort to preserve the ecosystem of the island of Inhaca. This project became a well known reference world wide.

In 1983 his first volume of poetry Raiz d'orvalho was published. Vozes anoitecidas followed in 1987, and it was awarded the Mozambican National Prize for Literature in 1991. Raiz d'orvalho, a collection of poetry, was published in Portugal and Italy, where it gained wide critical acclaim. The stories have also been adapted for radio and stage productions. In 1988 he was awarded a prize by the Organization of Mozambican Journalists (ONJ) for his regular "Cronicando" columns in "Notícias". His second collection of stories, Cada homem é uma raça, was published in Portugal in 1990. His columns in the newspaper "Notícias" were published in book form in 1991. Finally, in 1992 Couto published his first novel Terra sonâmbula. In the following years Couto published Estórias abensonhadas(1994), A varanda do frangipani(1996), Contos do nascer da terra(1997), Vinte e zinco(1999), Raiz de orvalho e outros poemas (1999), Mar me quer(2000), O último voo do flamingo(2000), Na berma de nenhuma estrada e outros contos(2001), O gato e o escuro(2001), Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada

terra(2002), O país do queixa andar (2003), O fio das missangas (2003), A chuva pasmada(2004),Pensatempos: textos de opinião (2005), and O outro Pé da Sereia (2006).

His books, as well as the ideas, events and opinions expressed in his journalistic career, form the basis of my analysis. Both his fiction and nonfiction illustrate how his writing is informed by the way of thinking of an elite group that attempts to shape meaning for their own purposes, and by "others" who resist that powerful group.

I will analyze how Couto challenges an exclusive meaning of Mozambique national identity to open it up to new, more inclusive possibilities. Couto brings to his writing the reminiscences of various cultures, languages, and traditions, challenging the notions of Mozambican that supposedly speaks for/to all Mozambicans, while, in reality, only addressing a select few. His stories raise new questions and tensions that disrupt any homogeneous notion of national identity. He questions the concept of Mozambican as a whole, unified, simple and naturally occurring identity. He denies any notions of essential elements that make a particular person Mozambican. Instead, he provides a multiplicity of new connections and definitions for its meaning. Couto creates these articulations acknowledging narrative as an art form that views history as ambiguous and identity as shifting and

evolving. Identity becomes a prism of possibilities with no center: *entre-lugar* and heterogeneous, told and retold, imagined and re-imagined. Couto questions the center to promote the participation of marginalized sectors of society in the production of the national narrative. His own subject position is itself a marginalized space: he is conscious of his ambiguous status as a Mozambican of Portuguese descent who does not write in the normative form of European Portuguese. This allows him to expose the ideological structures and practices that do not serve the diversity of Mozambicans nor adequately represent them.

Couto addresses the rich and dynamic history of the country shaped by contact with others through migrations, wars, slavery, colonialism, geography, the Cold War, and the establishment of the contemporary state system. Mozambicans from all walks of life both shape and are shaped by the social, political and historical context in which they live day-to-day. Couto challenges naturalized historical "common sense" understandings of history and identity and proposes new meanings for the past. I will analyze Couto's perception of the Mozambican post-revolution period, identifying his arguments that have made several Mozambican politicians uncomfortable and very critical of his work. Couto shows that the struggles throughout history led to struggles in the

recent past and the present. These struggles, and many of the problems related to them, are a large portion of the factors influencing the country's future. By writing about and, perhaps more importantly, understanding the country's history and peoples, in a more complex and problematic manner, Couto envisions a shared future. His vision incorporates the traditional and colonial heritages, and the multiplicity of voices, some of which have never been heard nor allowed much opportunity to shape the country ideologically or in practice.

Couto uncovers the deeply held, yet often invisible and powerful beliefs, and ideas both surrounding and within Mozambican identity. These signs, symbols and definitions act quite powerfully and non-coercively to limit perspectives and potential meanings. They are byproducts of social relations. Often, they are also falsely produced for political reasons, and designed to keep people from challenging the status quo. Couto shows how people may become trapped in an ideological world that does not serve them, but rather helps maintain a social order that works against their own emancipation / liberation. While they may resist oppression, even forms of oppression are shaped within a narrow framework or limited perspective. By defying this ideological world, Couto reinscribes the diversity of Mozambican lives through texts to demand a new social order.

By recovering Mozambican's mythology, oral traditions and folklore to literary discourse Couto produces historical awareness and reshapes identity. He articulates this diversity by presenting the interaction between the plurality of cultures, traditions, and ethnicities and showing how they all belong to what it means to be Mozambican. I will show this active, discursive practice by looking at the Mozambican cultural practices recovered by Couto and problematize their role and their significance to the Mozambican literary discourse. I will explore what Couto's work means to contemporary (emancipated) Mozambican literature. I am especially interested in problematizing Couto's relation to the Portuguese language as a means of expression of Mozambican experiences. I plan to confront Couto's engagement of his own subject position in relation to nativist and neo-colonial positions from other parts of Africa. I will establish what informs Couto's politically engaged discourse in relation to mimicry, hegemony and cultural capital. Couto's work strives to create a representational national narrative not defined by involuntary forms of servitude to history, memory and other oppressive legacies, but is still limited and problematic.

I use Cultural Studies as my theoretical approach because of the plurality of voices it allows me to bring to this work.

Cultural Studies analyzes a wide range of living forms of social practice. Informed by critical theories and contextual analyses, it examines the changing relationship between culture, society, history, politics and technology in the contemporary world. I will use the writings of Bill Ashcroft, Homi Bhabha, and Pires Laranjeira to study the key problems of how ideology frames the Mozambican social fabric in Couto's texts.

Literature is the ideal companion for Cultural Studies. It offers insights into experiences allowing us to reflect on life and re-imagine new ways. I will look at the imaginative representation of experiences offered by Couto in fictional writing to see how they gain new understandings. I would argue that Couto's work itself is the result of a mind that operates from a Cultural Studies perspective. Culture refers to the ideas we have, the values we hold, as well as the common way of life a community shares. Couto writes the shared way of expression and communication among Mozambicans living at a particular point in history. Through the writings of Terry Eagleton and Silvina Rodrigues Lopes I will study how his work shows social bonding and interactions. Also, how it helps us define Mozambican social existence, and identity in the communities he describes where relations of value and power are inevitably present.

Although literature has been published by Mozambicans since their independence, it has been neglected by the critics. The short story is the major genre of this literature. It remains vibrant today, and I want to examine how it contributes to the development of the national literature. Couto's literature consists of poems, novels and short stories. His narratives lie at the intersections of the critique of the past, the present, and a vision of the future. Couto's literature is intimately connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed. His work exposes injustices perpetrated throughout the centuries to particular social groups in his country. I will use the works of John Brenkman, Michel de Certeau, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to problematize this issue. However, Antonio Gramsci's work, particularly his concepts and ideas on hegemony, will be most prominent. I believe that Couto is aware of how the Mozambican national narrative has made Mozambican identity particularly vulnerable to cultural imperialism, i.e., hegemonic ideology that stereotypes, marginalizes and disenfranchises many groups. Couto's work is informed by analyses of oppression and resistance against it. The sarcasm in his stories forces the reader to re-evaluate concepts of belonging by reclaiming or transforming previously labeled socially undesirable accounts of group membership.



I will use the writings of Homi Bhabha and Fredric Jameson to show how Couto still invokes an essentialist view of nationality, although, his repeated destabilization of the essential nature of national identity demonstrates that his work remains dedicated to decentralizing the terms used to define identities. Couto's work problematizes through consciousness-raising the negative scripts offered by the dominant culture. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is useful and productive for this analysis. I believe that through this process Couto recognizes the possibility of a shared, more egalitarian space of Mozambican experiences. Through the sharing and growing consciousness that he aims to build, Couto's work opens up the possibility of a more self-determined understanding of the social world that will ultimately end hegemonic oppression, or at least create a more inclusive, less oppressive hegemonic ideology.

Couto appropriates the discourse of authenticity to describe ways of living that are true to the identities of marginalized social groups. He does not demand their inclusion or their respect "in spite of" their differences but "because of" the contributions each has made to national identity. Couto, as Partha Chatterjee and Michael Burayidi explain, demands respect for and acceptance of difference. This demand includes appeals to understanding of self, identity and ways

of life before the intervening influences of colonialism and imperialism.

Couto brings forward Mozambican cultural practices that embody distinctive political values, radically different from those of the mainstream, and where Western notions of domination are questioned or are noticeably absent. Couto recovers these values in order to make the reader understand and preserve them. They represent the renewal of respect for traditional values that can potentially produce a long lasting solution to political, economic, and social problems that have plagued Mozambicans.

Couto shows how Mozambicans' perceptions of their own interests are distorted by ideology, as understood by Gramsci, and must be freed by group-based transformation of hegemonic perceptions that serve to obscure relations and do not operate in their best interest.

By exposing generalizations about identity, Couto shows how his understanding of these subjectivities is critical of essentialized racial systems. The understanding of the subject is not made by a single articulation of identity standing in for the whole but by multiple, shifting and complex systems of meaning. Couto problematizes how individual and national narrative is articulated by numerous axes and none of them is their absolute defining feature. In fact, Couto's

understanding of identity illustrates an understanding of oneself as heterogeneous, with multiple identities, and political interests.

In the third century C.E., Bantu people migrated from the north to the area now known as Mozambique. They replaced descendants of the Khoikhoi of southwestern Africa. The societies that emerged were defined largely by the geography of the region. The groups included a variety of forms of organization.

Around the 8<sup>th</sup> century Arab traders established trading posts on the coast, particularly in the north and along the Zambezi River. With the cooperation of African chiefs, this trade expanded, and in the fifteenth century trading stations were founded along the Zambezi.

After Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama arrived in 1497, by rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese made Mozambique their primary trade center on the eastern coast of Africa. This Portuguese colony was one of the most exploited on the continent: almost every resource was taken from Mozambique, and everything that its colonizers "contributed" was simply put into place to better serve them.

Violence and neglect characterized Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique. After taking control of the major Arab

outposts, the Portuguese went inland, starting at the mouth of the Zambezi river. This process establishes the *Prazos*, large feudal farms that paid taxes to the crown. Investment lagged while Portugal devoted itself to the more lucrative trade with India and the colonization of Brazil.

Throughout the seventeen century Arabs and Portuguese fought for the control of the region. The Portuguese concentrated on the possessions to the south after they lost Mombassa and the Kenyan coast. In the eighteen century the slave trade started and the local economy developed around it. Portugal abolished slavery in 1869 but the slave trade to Brazil flourished because the routes from Mozambique were more difficult to patrol. In 1891 Portugal and Britain signed the treaty which outlined the borders of Mozambique today.

In addition to centralizing administrative control over the territory for the first time, the Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar instituted a system of forced labor, avoidable only through attaining an *assimilado* (assimilated) status through education and land ownership or employment outside the colony. After plundering the country for gold, ivory and slaves, the Portuguese virtually turned Mozambique over to private companies that made profits by controlling transportation routes to neighboring landlocked countries and providing cheap (often forced) African labor for the mines and

plantations of nearby British colonies. Little attention was paid to the local economic infrastructure or the skills of the country's population.

With this legacy, the stirrings of resistance and the decades of fighting that followed were predictable. Following the shocking Mueda Massacre in 1960, in which Portuguese troops opened fire on peacefully protesting villagers, the independence movement quickly gained momentum. Opposition groups formed among students in Lisbon, Portugal, and Paris, France, and among exiles in Southern Rhodesia, Malawi, and Tanzania.

In 1962, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, known as FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), united the fragmented opposition under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane. Frelime used nationalist discourse to highlight the evils of Portuguese colonialism. Mondlane and FRELIMO also concluded that armed struggle was the only way to gain independence, given the Portuguese intransigence in granting greater equality, rights, and freedoms to Africans. In 1964 the war for independence began in northern Mozambique. After more than a decade of revolutionary war, FRELIMO finally succeeded in overthrowing the Portuguese regime. However, when the Portuguese suddenly abandoned the country in 1975, they did so without preparing Mozambique for the change. FRELIMO

became the new Mozambican government and decided to embrace socialism, establishing close ties with the Soviet Union.

Socialism failed in Mozambique, and a group called RENAMO (Mozambique National Resistance) launched a rebellion. During more than a decade of fighting, RENAMO was never successful in overthrowing the government, but they did destroy a tremendous number of roads, schools, telephone lines and other elements of the nation's infrastructure. When a peace treaty was finally signed in 1992, there was almost nothing left of the country.

The rebuilding process has started. In 1994, the country held its first free elections in years. FRELIMO won, but only by a narrow margin, with RENAMO securing almost half the votes. A free-market economy has replaced the old socialist programs, and foreign aid has been generous. But for all its evident regeneration, Mozambique remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Many of its successes have been negated by droughts, famine and, most recently, floods. It will undoubtedly be a few years before substantial economic development begins in Mozambique, but the economy has been growing steadily.

Almost all Mozambicans are black Africans. Other racial groups of European and Indian descent represent less than 1% of the population. Most Mozambican ethnic groups speak one of

the Bantu languages. The largest group, the Makua-Lomwe, represents 40 % of the population. Around 7% of the people speak Portuguese, the country's official language, as a native language, usually in urban areas, while around 70% speak it as a second language. The majority of Mozambique's people cannot read and write. The first university was established in Maputo in 1962.

Most Mozambicans live in rural areas and are farmers. Some farmers use the slash-and-burn method, which involves cutting and burning forest trees to clear an area for planting.

55% of Mozambicans practice traditional African religions. Many are animists; others worship the spirits of their ancestors. About 25% of the people are Christians, mostly Roman Catholics, while other 15% of the people are Muslims.

There are fundamental colonial constructions that Couto never questions. The most important one that I want to problematize is the colonial borders as a difficult legacy for Mozambique. African states were constituted through agreements with the former colonial powers, not through the emergence of strong local leaders and governments that could establish effective control over a certain territory and extract the resources necessary to sustain an independent state. Most

African countries kept the language of the former colonizer in order to maintain the state integrity, which they perceived to be in danger. Couto does not speak to this issue. This absentia is revealing in relation to the author's ideological frame. He produces a Mozambican literature critically and politically engaged in social matters, but he does not question the integrity of the Mozambican state.

Couto challenges oppressive structures produced by colonial rule and preserved by the Mozambican political elite after the emancipation. He criticizes and exposes the contemporary Mozambican state without ever questioning matters of space or the legitimacy of the state itself. Colonial powers established Mozambican boundaries. These borders did not respect old regional states and divided peoples and ethnic groups -- regardless of whether or not these individuals ever considered themselves as such in pre-colonial days. The intercultural sites of migration, creolization, and hybridity, the old borderlands where cultures blended and clashed, where peoples resisted and embraced the "other" were all thrown into an imposed "colonial-space" during colonial times. The intercultural encounters and the interactive circulation of power that conditioned such exchange was disturbed and in some cases destroyed. Different groups were united under the same form of oppression. These "colonial-spaces" under colonial



rule had arbitrary borders negotiated between different colonial rulers. Couto never questions the "colonial-space".

All political borders are artificial. Many borders around the world separate members of distinct ethnic groups, and in countries with long histories, the modern state is superimposed on archaic political entities. What makes the African case unique is not the artificiality of its borders but the artificiality of its states. From his site of contestation, Couto is actually performing a service to the Mozambican state. By renegotiating a more flexible identity, it allows the state to have a more inclusive narrative. This aims to unify all Mozambicans and guaranty the ideological survival of the country.

## Chapter I

### Challenging "Common Sense": What is it to be Mozambican?

In this chapter, I will illustrate how Mia Couto criticizes the ideological continuity between the Portuguese colonial discourse and the post-independence political decisions that promoted a social structure based on the exclusion of African cultural traditions. I will focus on the images of power and authority as portrayed in Couto's work that deals with the exploration of local history. A general description of the historical context upon which the author draws his material and about which he expresses his political views will contextualize the work.

Being Mozambican is a difficult concept for most Mozambicans to fit into due to its lack of organic growth, growth achieved by internal support of the community it defines. Mozambique itself - the physical nation-state - is a creation of a power alien to this space and place. Therefore, it does not come easy to those individuals who have to fit into the national identity that is "Mozambican." The colonial state was the main hegemonic force in the lives of the

population, and this colonial force sustained this space as a political entity. The colonial system in Mozambique existed mainly to maintain order and exploit the natural resources of the country in service to the Portuguese empire and its ruling elite. At no point in time did it serve or provide services for the population-at-large.

The continuity of such hegemonic ideology in the post-independence period of Mozambican history is one of the main concerns in Mia Couto's work. He critiques and problematizes the lack of ideological rupture with the colonial past. After the country fought for and won independence from Portugal, the new government made a series of choices that established the ideological frame for what Mozambican has come to mean. When you control the way a society perceives itself, you control the ideological world of its people. This ideological control has practical implications. The Mozambican government used the power of ideological framing of the national narrative to perpetuate neo-colonial structures that benefit the ruling elite. The result was a sociopolitical system that favored greatly the Mozambicans that had been educated in Europe or that had become *assimilados* during the colonial rule.

Space, the physical or geographical area a person inhabits, is a fundamental aspect of one's individual and national identity; it is the primary definer of who we are and

offers a sense of belonging. Mozambique's political borders were negotiated among the European nations in the late nineteenth century, when Africa was seized and colonized by Europe, divided among its nations without respect to African cultural traditions, local forms of government or the spaces occupied by ethnic groups. In many cases, these ethnic groups were dispersed into different political entities created by the new borders imposed on the African continent. At the very genesis of this modern Mozambican state are the predatory ambitions of a self-serving invading regime. In addition to being the architects of the Mozambican geographical space, the Portuguese engineered the administration of the territory after the Conference of Berlin in 1895. The Portuguese administration established long-term goals that, for all intents and purposes, defined the future of millions of people. The administration was skeptical of the effectiveness of a policy of forced immediate assimilation that disregarded the ethnic diversity of Mozambique. The colonial empire recognized the complexity of assimilating what they considered so many "uncivilized peoples" to what they viewed as the sophistication of the Portuguese language and culture.

At its core, Portuguese colonialism was no different in nature to that of any other European effort at colonization. It was violent and used predatory tactics to manipulate,

intimidate, and control the population, while satisfying its own needs. In "Sydney Poitier na barbearia de Firipe Beruberu" Couto shows just how the colonial state mistrusted the local people and regarded all their activities as possibly subversive; even the most absurd signs of non-compliance or possible rebellion were crushed. Firipe Beruberu has a chair outside, close to a tree, where he cuts his customers' hair. Firipe likes to brag to his customers about his skills and how they have been requested by white people, and even by a foreigner. His customers receive his boasts with skepticism and Firipe, to make his point, shows a picture he had in his pocket:

Com mil cuidados desembrolhava um postal colorido de Sydney Poitier.

- Olhem essa foto. Estão a ver esse gajo? Apreciam o cabelo dele: foi cortado aqui, com essas minhas mãos. Tesourei-lhe sem saber qual era a importância do tipo. Só vi que falava inglês.

Os fregueses faziam crescer as suas dúvidas. Firipe respondia:

- Estou-vos a dizer: esse gajo trouxe a cabeça dele desde lááá, da América até aqui na minha barbaria...  
(Cada homem é uma raça 151)

To further make his case he presents a witness: an old man he paid off to lie for him. Later, two men from the

political police PIDE<sup>1</sup> come to talk to him. They want to know about the foreigner. In this story they are representatives of the colonial state. Couto describes one as "mulatto" and the other as "almost white." They ask Firipe for his documents. They want the picture of the foreign man that had been in his "barbershop." Firipe tries to explain that it was a joke, but his "witness," performing the job for which he was paid, confirms to the agents that Firipe had cut the foreign man's hair. The barber is then taken to prison. The absurdity of Firipe's statements is of no concern to these men. This tunnel vision is one of the aspects that Couto sees as one of the inheritances of the post-colonial state. The symbolic action becomes more important than reality itself.

The ideological frame of the Portuguese colonial power structure can be reduced to the slogan 'One State, One Race and One Civilization': sociocultural project that claimed to aim for a society based on a non-racist, civilizing mission through conversion to Christianity, miscegenation and assimilation. Although ideologically and in practice the final

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<sup>1</sup> PIDE - Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International and State Defense Police). The fascist regime in Portugal that lasted until 1974 used this organization to impose the regime's order and repress any sign of rebellion. It had a vast network of spies that kept an eye on subversive elements. It was known to apply torture and summarily execute everyone that they felt was a threat.

aspiration of Portuguese colonization was the assimilation of all people of the created nation-state of Mozambique into a Portuguese cultural construct, this required persistence and prudence; the administration viewed this process as a long-term effort. Within this developing nation-state, people that lived in Mozambique were divided into "*assimilados*" and "*indígenas*." The first spoke Portuguese and worked in jobs in commerce or industry, dressed according to Portuguese codes and behaved as Portuguese citizens and paid taxes; the second, were all Africans that did not follow the Portuguese social and cultural codes. This division and the critique of the systems which created and maintained these categories are major themes present in Couto's work. The concept of a non-racial society is one of the main aspects that will have continuity in FRELIMO<sup>2</sup>'s political program. The *assimilados* received the same rights and benefits as Portuguese citizens, while the *indígenas* were not afforded the same privileges and rights as long as they preserved their "old" ways and traditions. As we can see in Couto's work, the *assimilados* look at themselves as independence warriors, have access to social and political capital, and economic and educational

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<sup>2</sup> FRELIMO - Frente de Libertação the Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique) was founded in 1962 and it fought for the liberation of Mozambique from Portugal's colonial power. In 1975, FRELIMO negotiated Mozambique's independence and then established a one-party state.

opportunities and thus, were able to build a social structure that works as an efficient defense of the social system that, with little debate, thrives until today. However, the *indígenas* were the target of the established social system because they were perceived as racially and ethnically motivated and consequently opposed to the supposed progress and unity of the country. This division between the "assimilados" and the "indígenas" gave origin to the social disparity between city dwellers, who were perceived as the "urban elite", and the rural population, who were seen as "backwards."

This urban versus rural dynamic is a popular theme in Couto's stories. The author presents narratives informed by local traditions and uses them to challenge the authority with which the urban elite seem to be imbued. His message has political significance: Couto is clearly problematizing the current political system and demystifying romanticized notions of the independence warrior. He delegitimizes the narrative of the "urban elites" fighting for independence by portraying them as agents and reproducers of Eurocentric policies.

In "A fogueira" (Vozes anoitecidas) Couto presents the relationship between the state and the population allegorically as the relationship of an old couple. The man, thinking about the future, comes to believe that his wife will



die before him. As he is concerned about how this will affect him, he decides to dig a grave for his wife. In the process, he is the one that gets sick. He brings about his own demise with the effort of digging the grave. His wife begs him to stay home, but he continues to dig. Unwilling to accept the reality that his plan is debilitating him and negatively affecting his wife, he stubbornly persists. Later, he informs his wife that he will have to kill her because he has done so much work digging the grave that it would now be a waste of "work" if she did not die first. That night, the wife dreams about her family. In her dream, all her children, dead and alive, are on their farm, with her husband telling stories. She points out that most of those stories were lies.

In the morning, her husband is dead. In this allegory, Couto offers his prediction for the future of Mozambique. The policies that FRELIMO has implemented in the country are a grave that is supposed to bury the old; but, as in the Couto's story, if the old way does not die, then it has to be killed. In Couto's story, however, the "digging" of these policies creates the need for the grave of the system itself. One day, Mozambicans will realize that the system "estava frio, tão frio que parecia que, desta vez, ele adormecera longe dessa fogueira que ninguém nunca acendera" (Vozes anoitecidas 29).

1975 was a very important year for Mozambique. It won its political independence from Portugal through a painful war that lasted over 10 years. Mozambicans had to fight hard for their independence from Portugal. This struggle was fueled by the possibility of establishing the country as a space for the personal fulfillment, harmony and freedom to the many ethnic groups that were living in this space. FRELIMO was the embodiment of all hopes and aspirations for the future, and many Mozambicans rallied around this movement. FRELIMO had been the main political force during the war. Not surprisingly, with the support of the population, the organization seized power at the end of the war. However, a government was formed by FRELIMO without elections.

At that moment the country was at a crossroads. This was its opportunity to make important decisions for its future. Mozambicans had to articulate who they were and who they were to become. This decision was politically made by the Mozambican government, consciously and powerfully through a Eurocentric political project put forward by the urban elite: Mozambique was to become a modern industrialized state. After the independence, the new educated Mozambican urban elite took power and little changed for the population in general. How could that be? They were men and women educated in far away places, and they lived and thought within the ideological

frames of others, mainly Europeans. The hegemonic ideology of modern Mozambican national identity was conceived by a European-educated, urban dwelling, politically dominant group: the leadership of FRELIMO. Hegemonic ideologies create the way in which the idea of what it means to be Mozambican was "naturalized," or defined as "common sense." Unfortunately, the understanding of Mozambican identity by the group was underpinned ideologically by its colonial heritage. The way it accumulated influences of what Mozambican culture should be in the modern world was still based on a European understanding of what it means to be modern. In the novel Vinte e zinco, Couto comments on this Eurocentric desire when one of the characters, Andaré, says that the Portuguese have been intimately involved with the other people in Mozambique for so long that there were many Mozambicans that wanted to be like them. He himself used to want to be white, but no more. Couto writes:

Esse era o seu sonho constante. Depois, ele se confortou melhor consigo mesmo. Vestiu-se melhor com a sua pele, configurado na alma em que nascera. Seu medo era esse: que esses que sonhavam ser brancos segurassem os destinos do país. Proclamavam mundos novos, tudo em nome do povo, mas nada mudaria senão a cor da pele dos poderosos. A panela da miséria continuaria no mesmo lume. Só a tampa mudaria. (Vinte e zinco 133)

Although this character is speculating about the future of Mozambique, this book was written fifteen years after independence and this paragraph can only be understood as Couto's political comment on the aftermath of the revolution. Andaré's greatest fear, Couto points out, is what, in fact, happened in the new independent state of Mozambique. In "Portuguese Africa - Toward Mutual Assimilation", Richard A. Preto-Rodas argues that Portuguese influence in Mozambique was limited to a small black elite in the major coastal centers of the country. For this reason, he claims the influence of international movements, like Negritude, were limited, if not exclusive, to educated Mozambicans immersed in essentially European culture. Preto-Rodas goes on to characterize the Mozambican elite in the following manner:

He [the educated African] accordingly feels no less alienated from the surrounding indigenous society than he does from the European world which is prepared to accept him only to the extent that it can forget that he is African. Like the literate, French-speaking Negro, he, too, has attended schools which teach him of others' ancestors involved in historical events not even remotely connected with his own land and people. (Preto-Rodas 7)

FRELIMO promoted a number of projects and used tactics that were uncomfortably similar to the ones used during colonial rule. The fight against tribalism epitomizes the

purging of ethnic differences and divisions. Any sign of tribal identity was strongly prohibited. This policy was seen as fundamental: destroy the tribe to build the nation. This was very similar to the colonial project, and like it, FRELIMO worked towards a future when all Mozambicans would have abandoned their tribal customs and traditions in favor of new "modern" ways.

While hegemonic Mozambican political discourse uses the European-educated, urban elite as its ideological source, in Couto's stories, Mozambique comes from the rural space, an Afrocentric space usually marginalized and characterized as ignorant by Eurocentric political discourse. Couto educates the reader on the Cosmology that permeates these rural spaces. Once the reader is initiated into this new world, when s/he reads the interactions between the rural spaces and the spaces of the urban elite, it is the latter that is perceived as the source of misunderstandings and ignorance. Characters that personify authority and power are perceived as intruders. There is a political reason for this characterization and Couto is very quick to link this intruder status to the historical context of the formation of Mozambique, through the intrusive Portuguese colonial project.

Izidine Naíta has a difficult crime to solve. He is a police inspector sent to an old people's asylum, São Nicolão, built in an old colonial fortress, to investigate the bizarre murder of Vasto Excelêncio, the asylum's director. Izidine is the main character of A varanda do Frangipani and he is the perfect Mozambican. He is the product of everything that FRELIMO has worked for since the independence of the country:

Ele estudara na Europa, regressara a Moçambique anos depois da Independência. Esse afastamento limitava o seu conhecimento da cultura, das línguas, das pequenas coisas que figuram a alma de um povo. Em Moçambique ele ingressara logo em trabalho de gabinete. O seu quotidiano reduzia-se a uma pequena porção de Maputo. Pouco mais que isso. No campo, não passava de um estranho. (A varanda do Frangipani 44)

The space from which emanates the key meanings of modern Mozambicanity is a space deprived of African ancestry, that has no rapport with the African past. This was not a coincidence, as we have seen -- it was a political choice.

In this novel, Couto portrays the significant continuity of colonial ideology in post-independence and the results of the policy of assimilation. In many respects, this new Mozambicanity is cast from a European mold and it has been present for such a long time without critical interpretation that has become understood as "natural" to the populations it defines and constrains, but it is not presented as such in

Couto's work. The author shows the "side effects" of these "common sense" notions of what it means to be Mozambican and how they work as a form of exclusion, serving to restrict both those who inhabit them and those who are on the margins. This does not mean that all Mozambicans are like Izidine or identify with him, but Couto suggests that all Mozambicans that have access to power are like him, or that the reason they have privilege is because they represent what Mozambicans should be according to the nation-state that confers such privilege. It is a self-serving system that gives power to these "Mozambicans" that in turn reproduce the system in all aspects of the country's life. Ultimately, those who do not share Izidine's Europeanized identity are denied sociopolitical power and are excluded from the arenas of decision-making.

In Couto's literature we can see a mockery of these sociocultural conditions as he makes ironic the results of this assimilation into the "perfect" Mozambican, much like the ideology of assimilation of the colonial rule. He criticizes these meanings and people, like Izidine, who are portrayed as outsiders to the Mozambique that Couto reveals to us.

Izidine cannot communicate with the people he has to interview to complete his investigation because he cannot "hear" them; he cannot understand their world of reference.

For example, when Izidine talks to an old Portuguese man, Domingos Mourão, who has lived in Mozambique for most of his life, this man belongs organically to this land in a way that Izidine cannot comprehend. Domingos says "Venho de uma tábua de outro mundo mas o meu chão é este, minhas raízes renasceram aqui" (A varanda do Frangipani 48). For Izidine, this is an unfamiliar land that he does not recognize but that, most importantly, it does not recognize him. This estrangement is a product of the revolution that conceived these new Mozambican men.

In Portuguese colonial discourse assimilation was the ultimate goal. It anticipated a time when all Mozambicans would abandon their tribal ways and traditions in favor of the Portuguese civilization and language. After independence, the Mozambican government planned an ideological rupture with this colonial discourse. The problem with this process was that the space from which the new independent political discourse emanated was a Eurocentric one that continued the structures of power and instrumentalities left behind by the colonizer.

In post-independence Mozambique, tradition was interpreted as obscure, irrational, and incomprehensible. The elite, strangers in their own country, did not fully understand some of the events taking place. So while the independent political discourse changed the terminology of the



colonial discourse, in practice it still incorporated many colonial policies.

In the end, the independent political practice promoted principles of assimilation at a much faster rate than the Portuguese administration had ever tried to implement. Couto points out the *assimilados*, the urban elite, as the ones responsible for this mimicry of the colonial hegemonic ideology. They worked within the assumption that Eurocentric formulas were universal and a way by which to judge the worth of all cultural practices. Couto critiques these naturalized assumptions as a source of national myth from which a country's people get their sense of political reality.

FRELIMO's political project replaced the political link to Portugal to one with Eastern Europe, declaring a Marxist-Leninist order for the country. The proposal was to bring about a total shift from colonization to socialism in which everybody would be more or less incorporated into a "modern" state. The purpose was the rapid creation of a European-style, socialist nation through a process of authoritarian modernization. Ostensibly this process promoted above all the social groups who had appropriated control of the state. Gramsci describes this new order:

The proletarian revolution cannot be but a total revolution. It consists in the foundation of new modes of labor, new modes of production and distribution that are peculiar to the working class in its historical determination in the course of the capitalist process. This revolution also presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living that must be specific to the working class that must be created by it, that will become 'dominant' when the working class becomes the 'dominant' class. (Gramsci 41)

Marxism, introduced to the country by FRELIMO's leadership, provided the universal language of class capable of denying the ethnic and cultural diversity of Mozambique. This political philosophy gave the tools for the conception of an ideal, yet fabricated a country where the workers allowed FRELIMO to exercise its power in their name against the enemies of the people. The post-independence project of FRELIMO took seriously the transition to socialism. The political elite of the country was influenced by European principles and failed to look within for the answers to the absolute question of what it means to be Mozambican. Instead, the renegotiation of Mozambican identity still followed European concepts of progress and civilization with complete disregard for the people that were to be framed by it. The "liberators," had lived in the ideological world of the Portuguese colonizers, yet, under the guise of emancipation, they constructed another ideological prison. The new, modern

Mozambique, still a product of an elite class, continues to constrict Mozambicans today. When an entire community lives under the ideological world of an elite, the majority of people inhabit someone else's ideological world, and become vulnerable to oppression and marginalization. This form of oppression is often invisible, non coercive, and insidious because the oppressed becomes their own oppressors, agents of their own subjugation, and actively maintaining an oppressive social order that does serve their needs and forces them to the margins.

In "A história dos aparecidos", Couto presents an allegory of the way authority implements its policies, insisting on them even when, in practice, reality demonstrates their inadequacy. In this story the author criticizes the way everyday life has been forced to fit the policies and conform to the major decisions made in the capital, instead of allowing the realities of life to inform policy and practice. In this story, two men fight the bureaucracy of the system. A particular village becomes the battlefield representing the entire country when, after a flood, many people are dead or missing. The state officials have assessed the situation, counted the survivors, requested the necessary help and established a rescue operation. Two men from the village that had disappeared show up alive and are able to return to the

village. The officials have nothing to give them because they cannot prove that they are not dead. The story becomes a satirical view of how policies are implemented, regardless of what real situations occur. Instead of responding to an actual situation or event, policies are simply implemented. If the situation changes or if the assessment was not done correctly, it is reality that needs to be corrected and adapted to the policies, rather than the policy adapting to the reality. The implicit meaning is the government knows better and cannot make mistakes, or at least cannot recognize its mistakes. The men end up questioning themselves "será que é verdade? Não será que somos mesmo falecidos? Pode ser que eles têm razão." (Vozes anoitecidas 138) A governmental authority has said they must not exist, and they almost believe it to be true, denying their own "mind." A special commission is formed and the men must follow a chain of command to have their right to assistance recognized by the state, in other words, to be recognized as "alive." The story ends with one of Couto's most forceful statements about people that are in power: the character says, "- Esses que nos complicam hão-de cair. São eles que não pertencem a nós, não são vocês" (Vozes anoitecidas 139). This is the future that Couto sees for the government if they continue to ignore Mozambicans in the systematic way they have done until now.

One of the first hegemonic frameworks this new government continued to operate within was the inherited colonial concept of national unity. The consequence was the production of policies that guaranteed the perpetuation of Mozambique as a political entity, a nation-state with borders determined by colonial powers. It resulted in an effort to assimilate all Mozambicans to a modern industrialized world in many aspects identical to the assimilation project of colonial discourse.

The fight against colonialism after independence extended to all aspects of Mozambicans' lives, from the means of production to the repression of traditional belief systems that were seen as in opposition to this new enlightenment and that should be substituted by scientific socialism. Tribalism was seen as a threat to the unity of the country and in opposition to progress. Loyalty to the tribe above other groups was not tolerated. As a result, the nomenclature itself (tribalism versus scientific socialism) reflected the idea of industrial development as the transformative force behind the process of modernization.

Development, progress and modernization are not historically and culturally impartial expressions; they merely replaced the more problematic term Westernization but still preserve Western concepts at the center of modern life. The

Mozambican elite was still working within a space dominated by a European hierarchy. Clinton M. Jean points out in Behind The Eurocentric Veils how the quest for the industrial modern state was a misguided effort:

Such terms as *evolving nations*, *traditional cultures*, and *underdeveloped societies* referred solely to the place of the world they described in the journey toward progress. Such distortion of analytic vision produced those mistaken strategies of development in vogue today. (Jean 12)

For the post-independence Mozambican government, progress was a universal and absolute axiom. All discussions about the future of the nation established a semantic hierarchy between modern and democratic nations versus archaic and tribalist ethnic groups. Other meanings of Mozambican were discussed at different times. For example, as Lourenço do Rosário describes, even the concept of national identity rooted in biological heritage was put on the table:

foi sintomático o espanto e o clima de surpresa geral que se instalou na mente de todos aqueles que olhavam com muita admiração e simpatia o pragmatismo político dos nacionalistas moçambicanos, quando durante as discussões sobre a revisão da lei da nacionalidade, alguns dos mais prestigiosos combatentes, alguns dos quais tendo ocupado, sempre, lugares de grande responsabilidade governativa, desde a independência do País, defenderam com determinação e até ferozmente a sua modificação, preconizando um articulado que, na pratica,

retiraria a nacionalidade moçambicana de origem a uma substancial parte das camadas mais claras da sociedade. (Rosário 24)

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony is of special interest to the study of national identity because it focuses on culture and identity. Gramsci brings to the front the role of intellectuals in the process of domination. For Gramsci, one should pay attention to everyday routine structures and common sense values when trying to locate mechanisms of domination. Couto's ideological conception of Mozambique can only be understood when one is aware of the common sense values of the urban elite and how they came to be. The inscribers of modern Mozambicanity were the fighters that had dragged the colonial power from its seat. They were free men and women that for a long time had stood up and fought for the liberation of their people. They saw and understood themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Mozambican people, able to frame the ideological future of those same people whom they had struggled so hard to liberate. The problem with their assertion was that they continued to function within a European ideological world and they expressed bewilderment at what it meant to be Mozambican. What made it possible for them to inscribe Mozambicanity in a way that is so deeply patronizing and reductionist is the hegemonic legacy of a

deeply ingrained collective unconscious programmed to equate black with uncivilized.

The elite viewed Mozambique with the same eyes that had considered the rural areas exotic. This perspective produced an "us" and "them" mentality during colonial times and remained the filter through which rural Mozambicans were perceived by the new authority and power. Rural Mozambicans were perceived as the "other;" they remained behind a curtain of mystique - a strange and unattainable reality. The educated elite found in them the inexplicable "other" whose apparent irrationality reassured them of their own rationality. This process, that informed Mozambicans' common sense notions as to identity, skewed cultural perspectives in favor of the dominant group. The result was the empowerment of certain cultural beliefs, values, and practices, learned by the urban elite while in contact with the colonizer or by being educated abroad. Unfortunately, this empowerment also meant the subjugation and exclusion of other identities, particularly those pertaining to the vast majority of the rural population.

The ideological continuity that independent Mozambique maintains with colonial discourse is frightening. The premises behind the "otherness" of rural Mozambicans is the notion that rural areas are backward and traditional. More specifically, this ideological viewpoint considers tradition as an



obstruction to progress and the vision of economic development and modernization according to a Western model. Couto breaks with this glorification of modernization. He shows the people whom these assumptions have destroyed in the pursuit of this modern state; he gives them a voice and tells their stories.

Couto refutes the idea of an identity that reflects all complexities of being Mozambican. In the story "Afinal, Carlota Gentina não chegou de voar?" (Vozes anoitecidas 84) identity is expressed in a plural I, in a negotiation of several "eu somos tristes. Não me engano, digo bem. Ou talvez: nós sou triste" (Vozes anoitecidas 85). This idea is expressed by a man who is an example of a largely marginalized population in search of a political voice. We hear only his voice. It is clear that he is desperate. He wants the respect of others and he asks a doctor to put him into a terminal state of health so that he can gain the respect of others, because, according to him, dying people are more respected than the living. He says that he is in prison because he has made himself a prisoner. He turned himself in because "o futuro quando chega não me encontra" (Vozes anoitecidas 86) There is no place for him in this new order. The narrator tells the doctor how:

O poder de um pequeno é fazer os outros mais pequenos, pisar os outros como ele próprio é pisado pelos maiores. Rastejar é o serviço das almas. Costumadas ao chão como é que podem acreditar no céu? (Vozes anoitecidas 93)

Mozambique itself is today a country in the periphery of the decision making centers of the world; and in Mozambique, this man is in the periphery of the countries authority centers. He is in the periphery of the periphery, away from everything that is dear and important to modern Mozambique. Couto shows how the segments of the population that were once oppressed by the colonial regime are now the target of those that have gained access to power. However, these same groups oppress other communities they perceive as "smaller" or peripheral. Couto portrays the political elite as small people oppressed by others, who in turn use their power to create policies that treat the majority of the population with the same disregard as the colonial policies. More importantly, this elite does not trust anyone. Thus, it fights against Mozambican society in its entirety, which is seen as an enemy of the state. In Terra sonâmbula, Couto depicts the disdain of the authorities in the words of a local administrator:

Às vezes quase desisto de vocês, massas populares. Penso: não vale a pena, é como pedir a um cajueiro para não entortar seus ramos. Mas nós cumprimos

destino de tapete: a história há-de limpar os pés  
nas nossas costas. (Terra sonâmbula 61)

For the rest of the population, it is impossible to imagine a world free from this kind of oppression because they have never experienced anything different. In "Afimal, Carlota Gentina não chegou de voar?" we read the disclaimer of the narrator: "Sou filho do mundo" (Vozes anoitecidas 94). He clearly states to the doctor that he comes from another "world" and his actions can only be understood and judged from where he belongs. In this short story, Couto shows a rural Mozambique yearning for an escape from this reality. "We am" unable to live in this constraining ideological world.

In the novel A varanda do Frangipani, the nurse Marta Gimo discusses with inspector Izidine the result of this new modern Mozambique. Izidine, himself an *assimilado*, does not see it. By giving a picture of the social or functional context of these results, Couto defies the cultural, hegemonic logic of postcolonial national heritage discourse through which national culture has become naturalized, and he attacks the way in which it has been used as an instrument of disinheritance. Izidine is part of the larger project that has abducted the Mozambican past and he fails to see the death of his own ancestry around him:

- Escute, senhor inspector: o crime que está sendo cometido aqui não é esse que o senhor anda à procura.
- O que quer dizer com isso?
- Olhe para estes velhos, inspector. Eles todos estão morrendo.
- Faz parte do destino de qualquer um de nós.
- Mas não assim, o senhor entende? Estes velhos não são apenas pessoas.
- São o quê, então?
- São guardiões de um mundo. É todo esse mundo que está sendo morto.
- Desculpe, mas isso, para mim, é filosofia. Eu sou um simples polícia.
- O verdadeiro crime que está a ser cometido aqui é que estão a matar o antigamente...
- Continuo sem entender.
- Estão a matar as últimas raízes que poderão impedir que fiquemos como o senhor...
- Como eu?
- Sim, senhor inspector. Gente sem história, gente que existe por imitação.
- Conversa. A verdade é que o tempo muda, esses velhos são uma geração do passado.
- Mas estes velhos estão morrendo dentro de nós. E batendo no peito, a enfermeira sublinhou:
- É aqui dentro que eles estão morrendo. (A varanda do Frangipani 60)

These old men and women are the link to a past that the populations in rural areas have preserved in spite of all efforts of the government to eliminate them. In Couto's stories the Mozambican past is anchored in traditions that far precede the independence war. These old people are Couto's source of modern Mozambicanity. Through his stories, however, we can see that its past is a prisoner of a foreign hegemonic ideology - progress and modernity according to western standards.

The concept of Mozambican identity was forged during the independence fight and gained widespread acceptance throughout the country, but the post-independence civil war was the space in which the new meanings of Mozambican came to full fruition. Part of this ideological confrontation was the reactionary response to fight anything that opposed it. The civil war gave origin to a nation-state as paranoid as its colonial predecessor. It repressed anything that was perceived as a threat.

In "As baleias de Quissico" (Vozes anoitecidas 107) Bento dreams of a beached whale full of food (could it be a submarine?), as the food one would find in a market. He talks to his friends and the stories are passed on until they reach the capital. Maputo responds just as the colonial power would have responded. Bento's dreams are perceived as reactionary and possibly subversive, and the authorities act immediately to stop the "conspiracy." Where Bento sees a whale, the government sees a possible submarine supplying materials for subversive activities. In the story, the whale becomes, for the government, an invention of imperialists to paralyze the people. This is the excuse the "people in Maputo" need to destroy Bento's world. One world comes and destroys the other although, in reality, the whale represents no threat. As one of the characters explains "Quero dizer que a baleia parece

com aquilo que não é. Parece um peixe, mas não é. É um mamífero. Como eu e como você, somos mamíferos" (Vozes anoitecidas 112). The whale's only sin is to be the product of a magical world that functions within a traditional mindset and in that it is not "como eu e como você." That is the tragedy of this situation in Mozambique. We can see in Couto's work that both worlds cannot coexist and one has to destroy the other. Peter Fry, in his article "Cultures of Difference: The Aftermath of Portuguese and British Colonial Policies in Southern Africa" writes:

In spite of the anti-colonial discourse of the centre and of FRELIMO in general, it is impossible not to observe that the socialist project for Mozambique was if anything more 'assimilationist' than the Portuguese ever dared to imagine and it is tempting to suggest that this is one of the reasons why the Mozambican elite found the socialist program so attractive. Structurally speaking there was little difference between an authoritarian capitalist state run by a small body of 'illuminated' Portuguese and assimilados and an authoritarian socialist state run by an equally diminutive and equally enlightened vanguard party. (Fry 129)

The Mozambique that this project produced is very exclusive and only a small number of Mozambicans participated and participate in it. Its accomplishments are very modest but the Mozambican elite is not self-critical or self-reflexive,

and views this new Mozambique through the same eyes of the mother in "O menino no sapatinho":

De tão miserenta, a mãe se alegrou com o destamando do rebento - assim pediria apenas os menores alimentos. A mulher, em si, deu graças: que é bom a criança nascer assim desprovida de peso que é para não chamar os maus espíritos. E suspirava, enquanto contemplava a diminuta criatura. Olhar de mãe, quem mais pode apagar as feiuras e defeitos nos viventes? Ao menino nem se lhe ouvia o choro. Sabia-se de sua tristeza pelas lágrimas. Mas estas, de tão leves, nem lhe desciam pelo rosto. As lagriminhas subiam pelo ar e vogavam suspensas. (Na berma de nenhuma estrada 13)

Couto's work denounces the shell that Mozambicanity has become. It is a set of articulations and meanings that do not serve anyone. Couto's works describes the symbols of this new country as lacking real meaning. The population does not recognize these new symbols because the political project which they represent has no place for the old ways, the old traditions:

O silêncio dela foi maior que a paciência do inspector. O homem insistiu:  
- Que quer que eu faça? Diga-me, você que sabe deste mundo...  
- Você quer condená-los!  
- Quero saber a verdade...  
- Quer condená-los, sabe porquê? Porque você tem medo deles!  
- Medo, eu?  
- Sim, medo. Estes velhos são o passado que você recalca no fundo da sua cabeça. Esses velhos lhe

fazem lembrar de onde vem... (A varanda do Frangipani 78)

The first novel published by Couto was Terra sonâmbula. The name, sleepwalking land, is extremely revealing of the way Couto sees his own country. The story is told by three characters sometime after the independence and during the civil war. This war is portrayed by Couto as a punishment. It is like "aquele elefante se perdendo pelos matos é a imagem da terra sangrando, séculos inteiros morimbundando na savanna" (Terra sonâmbula 39). In the middle of the rubble that remained from the independence war and its aftermath, a young boy Miudinga and an old man Tuahir try to survive. They seek refuge in an old bus that has burned in the middle of the road during an attack and still has several cadavers inside. They find another cadaver close by, and beside, they find a suitcase with papers in which Kindzu, believed to be one of the cadavers, tells his personal story. Through the reading of Kindzu's story, the old man and the little boy take us through an old Mozambique living in the ancient rituals and belief systems, where the country's "desavenças, os tropeços que sofria, provinham de eu não ter cumprido a tradição. Agora, sofria castigos dos deuses, nossos antepassados" (Terra sonâmbula 45). Couto describes this Mozambique as vulnerable -



- subject to continuous destruction; it is a place whose people are reduced to survival mode:

Ouvíamos a baleia mas não lhe víamos. Até que, certa vez, desaguou na praia um desses mamíferos, enormão. Vinha morrer na areia. Respirava aos custos, como se puxasse o mundo nas suas costelas. A baleia moribundava, esgoniada. O povo acorreu para lhe tirar as carnes, fatias e fatias de quilos. Ainda não morrera e já seus ossos brilhavam no sol. Agora, eu via meu país como uma dessas baleias que vêm agonizar na praia. A morte nem sucedera e já as facas lhe roubavam pedaços, cada um tentando o mais para si. Como se aquele fosse o último animal, a derradeira oportunidade de ganhar uma porção. (Terra Sonâmbula 23)

The way Couto presents it, Mozambique today is a mere shell of a nation. It is a country in crisis; and it is most definitely a crisis of modernity, not of tradition. It is the manifestation the very shivers of modernization. If modernity is defined as being modern in the way in which the Western world is modern, then Mozambique is far from it. But if modernity is defined as the outcome of a complex process of the modernization of different traditions, then modernity encompasses many different definitions, and can be expressed or manifested in unique ways, not solely in a Western way.

A continual challenge to any proclaimed "common sense" definitions of what it means to be Mozambican is accomplished

in Mia Couto's work. He points out that the definition imposed by the government, informed by its modernization vision for the country, is insufficient and lacks confirmation on the ground. His writings remind us, in not so subtle ways, that identity is a complex set of relations informed by power and privilege, historical context, language and geography. To be a Mozambican is to live in those intersections at every moment. It is also a never-ending re-negotiation of the center that resists simplification and unity. The reader must think and re-think, never settling for an easy answer or coming to any "natural" conclusions.

The next chapter discusses the alternative Couto presents to create a more inclusive national identity.

## Chapter II

### Re-covering: Searching Through the Roots

This chapter problematizes how Mia Couto points out the shortcomings of the Mozambican revolution and the implications and consequences that the urging to modernize has had on traditional culture. I will focus on the dynamic between processes of social remembering and neglect through which Couto's literature recovers Mozambican traditional culture for the literary canon. In so doing, Couto contrasts ideology and reality, crucial to the renegotiation of a new identity (or an old recovered identity). I will demonstrate how his literature also portrays episodes of Mozambican life from the perspective of the common people, building a cultural boundary of the new identity. I will illustrate how this exposes the national heritage discourse that has served as the basis to legitimize the state and the elite, to the point that the revolutionary generation has lost its direction, it has no identity; in fact, Couto portrays it as a lost generation. I will show how the author goes beyond simple critique and identifies a new source of national heritage discourse that can provide a

cultural continuum where the renegotiated identity can by-pass the damage done by the revolution.

The Mozambican State has tried to produce Mozambican citizens loyal to a pre-established order, but Couto shows in his writing that the Mozambican citizens already exist and it is the frame that has been used to measure them that is inadequate and needs to be changed. Couto writes about people that perform Mozambican identity every day but that do not conform to the official framework. He tries to renegotiate this frame, putting forward a new version that accommodates the many Mozambicans that Couto sees around him.

The concept of Mozambican heritage today, according to Couto, has to be understood through various national instances of public recognition, especially in the dynamic between urban and rural spaces. As we saw in the previous chapter, these governmentally orchestrated instances have within them an inherent structural logic, a logic that Couto shows to run counter to the desires and expectations of the majority of Mozambicans and that erases the traditional sense of ancestry and heritage. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their cultural heritage.

Mistakenly, the government did not see, in a socialist and Marxist tradition, a distinction between the state and the

public arenas of citizen discourse. It was assumed that to subject the economy to the control of the socialist government was equal to its control by the citizenry. In reality, the state became an authoritarian structure, instead of a participatory democratic one.

Couto's work confirms that one of the reasons why traditional culture has survived this assault and is so well preserved in rural Mozambique is because it works as a common law that rules the life of the rural populations. He shows in many respects how this common law lives side by side with the civil, with the communities living primarily within the common law system and solving whatever social conflicts that may arise within that traditional device. In rural communities in Mozambique everyone is expected to work for the greater good of the group. The dead ancestors are regarded as the guardians of the allowed order. Society is vigilant ensuring that there are no conflicts between the people and the realm of the spirits. In case of transgressions, the common law provides solutions increasingly more strict in relation to the seriousness of the offense.

In Couto's work, communities organize themselves around these beliefs that exert effective control and promote order through the pressure of public opinion. His characters are very aware of this pressure and act to avoid the community's

disapproval. When this social device does not work the characters are subjected to public mockery or ultimately their total removal from the communities' social activities, which in a traditional community means that all foundations for life are paralyzed.

Through Couto's work I will look at the repositories that maintain the core elements of this Mozambican traditional culture. Couto's work provides a unique opportunity to consider identity as a cultural endeavor and not as the political project that has often used progress as an oppressive discursive practice. Couto questions the nature, origin, and maintenance of the new revolutionary culture as an imposed collective knowledge and representation of Mozambique that excludes traditional culture in the name of a present and future modernity. The author gives voice to marginalized traditional elements so that such collective knowledge and representation can instead be collectively created. Couto's stories empower those that have been subjugated or silenced within dominant paradigms of progress and modernization by breaking the silence.

The historical roots of Mozambican cultures in pre-colonial social identities inform Couto's reconstruction of contemporary social identities through animal folklore, mythology and symbolism, recovered to literary discourse by

the author. This in effect connects and creates a continuum between pre-colonial and contemporary cultures. At the center of Mia Couto's ideological framework is the subversion of colonial cultural hegemony and the critique of its continued presence in the post-colonial condition. It is in this context that I will talk about recovery, problematizing the recuperation of Mozambican traditional cultural practices to the national political discourse. A strategy employed by Couto to validate traditional cultural heritage is the usage of specific imagery and symbolic references to traditional culture in his writing. For example, in Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra the entire text can only be understood if the reader accepts the internal logic of the succession of funeral rites being performed and the prescriptive aspect that tradition has in this case, and also the cultural significance of the river and the house.

National heritage discourse is the effort of a culture (or elite) to keep itself in existence by having a very selective historical memory. Couto shows that there are several competing discourses in Mozambique, but the dominant one is the one provided by the state that focuses on the war of independence as its source of legitimacy. In his writing, Couto writes how even within this dominant discourse there are different levels of recognition. Some characters live through

it, others only live through part of it, and other characters move between competing discourses depending on what is most favorable to them at any given moment.

In the building of a nation, differences disappear when all of its citizens have many things in common, but it is fundamental that they also forget what made each group unique at one time. Couto's work is not against the nation, but it is against the forgetting. For the author, the building of the nation does not have to be the result of an eradication of all that is traditional. As seen in the previous chapter, such eradication is particularly insidious and cruel because the political project that precedes it in Mozambique is infused with an ideological world that is not native to the land and it does not serve its interests. In Decolonization and the Decolonized, Albert Memmi talks of this eradication and of the entrapment that such a political project really stands for:

Culture is also a bond, a social cement, a communal site, a refuge from the wretchedness of existence, a beacon and escape valve. But this exclusive anchorage - to a reconstructed past or the splendors of a hypothetical future, the excessive valuation placed on the past and unreasonable expectations for the future, navigations between phantoms and myths, an archaic golden age and a glorious future - leads to the same result: the destruction of the present. Isn't this what the aristocrats want? Instead of helping to free people's intellects and allowing them to flourish, pseudoculture has misled them about the nature of true culture. (Memmi 43)



To pursue the political project that looks at the Mozambican revolution with excessive valuation and as its core, is then a new form of enslavement to pseudo-culture, in many cases in much more brutal ways than during the colonial period. Couto points out the deception of privileged identities by exposing them as often illegitimate, overly narrow and restrictive. This goes to the heart of what Memmi points out as a misled, misguided, and destructive political project.

Discursive interaction within Mozambican public sphere is governed by protocols of style and decorum that are themselves correlates and markers of status inequality. These function to marginalize traditional members of the ethnic groups and to prevent them from participating as peers. This was done in the context of a socialist and socialized society in which the common good was the ultimate goal. However, this project presented several assumptions that are problematic. First, it assumed the possibility of participation in the decision making process of all social groups, while in fact it established rules for participation, being in practice exclusionary of many voices; second, it assumed that the multiplication of identitary discourses was necessarily a threat to the national grand narrative, and that only one

single public and politically recognized national narrative was the place to articulate multiple discourses; and finally, the assumption that the articulation of a national identity should be restrictive to issues of common good, and that the manifestation of individual or group based interests was at all times objectionable. It is clear that in the context of political deliberation, even in a seemingly egalitarian decision making process, there are structures of power and domination in place that become invisible to the individuals participating in the process. Like J. Mansbridge points out:

The transformation of the 'I' into 'we' brought about through political deliberation can easily mask subtle forms of control. Even the language people use as they reason together usually favours one way of seeing things and discourages others. Subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover they are not heard. [They] are silenced, encouraged to keep their wants inchoate, and heard to say 'yes' when what they have said is 'no'. (Mansbridge 1990: 127)

Mozambicanity became then a concept that absorbed the subordinate groups into a false 'we' that reflected the more powerful and dominant group.

In Couto's texts, this project is portrayed as an ideological burden and a missed opportunity, and it is shown to produce a generation whose values cannot operate in the

post-independence space, that feel spiritually alienated from the country, and that has little sense of community.

By addressing the dynamic between tradition and modernity Couto's work recovers marginalized identities, excluded collective memory, and logics of traditional action. Considering this dynamic, focusing on African oral tradition and contemporary literature, Patrick Chabal writes in Vozes Africanas that:

Uma vez que é habito contrastar a chamada cultura "tradicional" oral africana com a designada "moderna" literatura escrita, gostaria aqui de sublinhar que tal dicotomia é errada e não faz parte da minha argumentação. A noção de que há uma "tradição" identificável que pode ser distinguida da "moderna" é, sem dúvida, uma dádiva das asserções culturais do pensamento. Na realidade, toda a cultura é uma constante fusão transformativa do tradicional e do moderno. Deste modo, modernidade não é o inverso de tradição, mas antes tradição tal como mudou e se modernizou. (Chabal 23)

Although I understand this premise, I believe that Couto's work speaks to a different kind of change and modernization. As the same author states earlier in the same book, the modern African state preceded the nation. A fundamental part of Couto's ideological framework is the critique of the state's choice to create a modern culture that does not include what I believe to be an identifiable tradition. I believe that Chabal's argument about the "fusão

transformativa" does not apply because in that case at best there are two cultures in Mozambique and one is systematically erasing the other. In Couto's work, there is clearly an ideological struggle between these two cultures. The traditional culture participates of this ongoing "fusão" (fusion) to which Chabal refers, and that will eventually produce a local modernity, and this culture is lived by the majority of the population. However, there is a Western culture that has a grip on power, believed to be the key to modernity that is being superimposed by the elite, and not transformatively fused with local culture.

The "fusão" to which Chabal makes reference, does not come through in Couto's writing of the political project of the elite. This political project, as I see it described by Couto, does not include or even consider the traditional as a participating element in the production of modernity. The political elite choose instead to enforce an imported culture that is an imprint of the Western world, in many ways informed by the phenomena of globalization that does not respect the local context. In fact, the modern urban Mozambican man living in this later culture displays an absolute estrangement when in contact with people who do participate in that "fusão." This is akin to cultural obliteration.

The incredible power of the transformative combination of traditional and modern is something that Chabal will have us take for granted, but as Couto points out, political projects create hegemonic devices that do not negotiate or promote fusion with a tradition. In fact, in Mozambique tradition's mere existence is perceived as a challenge to the hegemonic political project. Couto's work is, in many aspects, a fight for the survival of tradition and eventual replacement of this obliteration by the "constante fusão transformativa do tradicional e do moderno" (Chabal 23), which he regards as a more organic cultural development. In Couto's work, Mozambican culture is not the rigid set of rules or behavioral patterns superimposed, but a set of shared expectations and understandings concerning everyday practices which enable the cultural flexibility necessary for the fusion that Chabal refers to.

In her article "Creating a National Culture: An Overview" from 1978, Barbara Barnes makes it very clear that in Mozambique the fight against elements of traditional culture was the plan from the beginning and that there was no intent to incorporate any local culture into this political project:

The direction and ideological content for cultural change in Mozambique today, as well as the methods developed to encourage them, have grown out of the

ten year experience of armed struggle necessary to defeat Portuguese colonialism. That struggle was a fundamental act of cultural resistance which took political form under the direction of FRELIMO to drive out an alien and oppressive culture. Innovations which began in the northern third of the country liberated during the war were the beginnings of profound changes in people's lives which are still only beginning to be realized. Graça Simbine has explained the guiding principles of the Mozambican liberation struggle as "the abolition of the exploitation of man by man ... the gradual collectivisation of production and the popular exercise of power." Other ideas include "new concepts of education, social assistance, and social well being ... [and] a constant fight against ambition, opportunism, tribalism, racism, and corruption." (Barnes 35)

Many efforts to promote cultural forgetting have been made in the name of the fight against tribalism. One of the consequences of this fight was the forced relocation of entire villages in an attempt to promote the urbanization of the country. The announced workers-peasants alliance was not produced, on the contrary, the rural areas, that represent 80% of the population, were under attack. This is not surprising because it was also in the rural areas that the civil war, which followed the Mozambican revolution, took place and the urban elite looked at these areas as hostile. Although the policies to eradicate traditional organizations there was meet with resistance and even when "Frelimo officials claimed to have eliminated 'traditional' authorities or chiefs following independence, they never really disappeared and actually

flourished in some parts of the country during the war"  
(Pitcher 115).

The narrative of the revolution put forward by the Mozambican government, as it engaged the enormous challenge of cultural transformation to create a modern state, a Mozambique in which social practices established the limits of political participation and the marginalization of the population that did not fit into the governmental formula. This was done out of the perception that the nation needed to exercise an hegemony over all that occupied its political limits. Couto makes it clear that this promoted the naturalization and celebration of historical persons and events of the revolution, while disemboweling other alternative forms and modes of historical remembering. As a reaction, Couto, on the one hand, shows to the Mozambican elite, in human terms, the traditional culture that they are fighting to forget through an hegemonic superimposition; while on the other hand, he portrays the resistance offered against the superimposition of culture and of identity.

In "Creating a National Culture: An Overview" Barnes makes it clear that this narrative of the revolution was a created model that Mozambicans were expected to naturalize.

They were to shape their lives to this shell, this new source for cultural acceptance and political participation:

Culture is not just the reflection of the composite and developing life of the people. Organized cultural activity and cultural stances in the People's Republic of Mozambique are weapons for revolutionary change, part of a planned offensive to promote educational and ideological growth designed to create a new society free of the exploitation of one by another. To use the words of Minister of Education and Culture, Graça Simbine, Mozambique in July 1976: 'the true culture is the revolution.' For this reason it seems most appropriate to consider culture and cultural goals in Mozambique within the context of the tremendous political changes which have taken place in the last 15 years and are anticipated for the future. (Barnes 35)

What characterized the narrative of the revolution was the attempt to promote a rapid urbanization, industrialization, establishment of a socialist state, and the abandonment of traditional ways of life that, as we have seen, were considered backward. This could only be accomplished if all citizens participated in a process of forgetting. For Couto, the result was that they produced two countries. One of his characters in Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra explains what happened:

Nenhum país é tão pequeno como o nosso. Nele só existem dois lugares: a cidade e a Ilha. A separá-los, apenas um rio. Aquelas águas, porém, afastam mais que a sua própria distância. Entre um e outro



lado reside um infinito. São duas nações, mais longínquas que planetas. Somos um povo, sim, mas de duas gentes, duas almas. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 18)

It becomes clear that not only not all people participate in the national narrative of the revolution, but that some resist its hegemonic effect. Couto's text emphasizes representations of the Mozambican other inherent to the rural setting, in this case on the island. Tradition pervades his text and a relation of center and periphery is created between the city and the island. However, it is in the periphery that Couto takes us on a walk through the past that reveals the true nature and what he perceives to be the Mozambican identity. As in other texts, Couto writes the culture of everyday rural life. This is where the author finds Mozambican identity being performed every day. His work gives us great insight into local life, to what culture does, and what people do with it. The rural setting is then the repository of the core elements of that identity and the people that inhabit this space are brought to the center and Couto's counter heritage discourse.

Couto's proposition is to look further into the past, beyond the independence war, beyond the colonial experience, and find the cultural practices that have resisted and survived, and are still present in everyday life, in order to

find core elements of what defines Mozambican national identity. Looking at the hegemony/resistance dialectic that Couto writes, we can see how he aspires for his people to maintain their traditional cultural practices and to have the ability to inscribe its core elements in the dominant discourse. Couto's literary narrative uses the population's traditional worldview as a way to define those elements.

The forms of resistance to the imposition that in Couto's work are everyday subaltern counter-acts, or everyday acts of resistance, which imply that identity is produced and sustained through remembrance and action. The subjectivities of identity-based narratives in Couto's work are produced through recognition and in many ways these accounts subvert and correct public myth and memory.

In Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra one of the characters that comes from the city is Últímio. He is a bureaucrat that derives his identity from what he possesses and what he, an urban dweller, can flaunt to the people on the island. For him, material goods are a silent but effective messenger of identity. He hopes to translate power and privilege from the strategic placement of a collection of symbols that he believes to associate him with those concepts. The critique of this character is summarized in the ironical

scene where his imported car is stuck in the mud of the island. The car was supposed to impress people and foreign investors, as well as underline the differences that Últímio believes to exist between him and his family and everyone else on the island, but the island resists; it is the ground itself that stops him in his tracks, and all that he had planned fails. It is the mud and the dirt of the island that sets the time and demands from the urban visitors respect for the timings and sequences of traditional life. The ground, the mud, the country itself refuses to be imposed upon an external agenda and fights back every chance it gets. A good example of this is the refusal by the land to receive the body of the dead father before the performance of certain rites and the resolution of traditional proceedings. When Últímio tries to anticipate the funeral, it is not the family that resists, although he is going against tradition, but the land does, the land, where time and place blend together, alive with the spirits of the ancestors, closes itself completely and refuses to receive the father's body. The same ground that had gotten his car stuck in the mud, resists now, bends the metal of the shovel and is too hard to be dug up.

One the most important bases of African religiousness is the cult of the ancestors. Major decisions are preceded with prayers and the answer from the departed relatives comes in

the form of a sign or a dream. This is why people offer sacrificial food and drink, and share their meals with them. They are believed to be present and the elders are the ones responsible for the ancestors. The dead carry a particular power over the fertility of the land and the abundance of water, which for agricultural communities was vital for survival. The disrespect for ancestors and heritage leads to the upset of balance that results in social unrest and harvest disasters. People believe that they are in constant contact with the spirits. There are friendly and unfriendly ones. Some protect the family, the community, and communicate through visions or dreams. The spirits also punish with sickness and disease anyone that neglects to take care of them through sacrifices. There are also the unpredictable and deceitful spirits, always trying to harm those that come near them. They live in dark and hostile places.

In rural Mozambique, the working knowledge produced by this search for a cognition of the world allowed people and culture to survive because they had a clear understanding of how to survive in their environment, of the seasons and of the workings of human and spiritual behaviors.

Until the present day, stories, myths, idiomatic expressions and the telling of ancestors' accomplishments are ways of passing down moral codes, and tradition. In

Mozambique, traditional culture is animist and as such, nature is divine, it explains everything. In Couto's literature, this worldview lives in parallel with a more Western, modern worldview, and in many cases they collide. In the short story "O dia em que explodiu o boi Mabata-bata" in Vozes anoitecidas, Couto contrasts the traditional and the modern worldviews. Azarias, a young shepherd, is in the fields with his animals when a bull explodes "no capim em volta choveram pedaços e fatias, grãos e folhas de boi. A carne eram já borboletas vermelhas" (Vozes anoitecidas 47). He starts to think about what might have happened to the bull and in that thought process we have insight into this philosophy of the world that surrounds him. He first considers if it was lightning but quickly rejects the idea because:

interrogou o horizonte, por cima das árvores. Talvez o ndlati, a ave do relâmpago, ainda rondasse os céus. Apontou os olhos na montanha em frente. A morada do ndlati era ali, onde se juntam os todos rios para nascerem da mesma vontade da água. O ndlati vive nas suas quatro cores escondidas e só se destapa quando as nuvens rugem na rouquidão do céu. É então que o ndlati sobe aos céus, enlouquecido. Nas alturas se veste de chamas, e lança o seu vôo incendiado sobre os seres da terra. (Vozes anoitecidas 48)

As he thinks about the possibilities we enter a world with its own logic. Rural Mozambique is in Couto's work the

guardian of this philosophy of the world developed by observation and the questioning of everyday experience. The development of this philosophy requires the association of different instances of life and the identification of the connections between various experiences unique to the country. These associations give origin to a full, all-embracing Mozambican system of life. This experience was passed from generation to generation, sometimes upholding others questioning everyday practices, and correcting transgressions when appropriate. This is what the author identifies as the source for the subjectivities of Mozambican identity.

These pre-colonial cultural practices have been consciously removed from Mozambicans' political discourse because they do not fit within the Western concept of development and progress. Couto subverts this discourse. Pre-colonial Mozambican forms and practices have gradually slipped away, or undergone a process of displacement, distortion and disarticulation. Couto's work is an attempt to create an interaction of cultural uniqueness by retrieving and focusing on the marginalized people of Mozambique -- meaning the less Westernized, the rural people. He writes to inscribe them in the literary canon. Couto preserves their traditions and combines them with new influences and languages to foster new forms for Mozambique's vernacular culture.

In the story "De como o velho Jossias foi salvo das águas" (Vozes anoitecidas), Couto presents the idea of respect for the ancestors and the eventual triumph of tradition. Jossias is in charge of taking the "paus de ngogo", an alcohol made from corn, to the cemetery as an offering to the dead so that the village may have rain, but he drinks it and tries to fool the ancestors by replacing it with the stagnant water that he tries to collect from the bottom of a well. When he goes down to the bottom of the well to collect the water and thus deceive the spirits, the walls of the well collapse, killing him.

In Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra, the idea of punishment of those that do not follow tradition gives way to the more urgent question of preservation and passing on of the legacy. In Luar-do-Chão, the mysterious island of fantastic events that anchors Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra, Couto shows the respect for the ancestors as we see the population performing rituals to avoid the upset of balance, communication between the living and the dead through dreams and visions, and this philosophy of the world being performed and people living through it. We also witness the desperate attempt of a "dead" grandfather to pass on his way of life, not to his children, but to his grandson, skipping a generation.

The critical perspective of the modernization of the country put forward by Couto is seen in the moralizing representation of social illnesses and misery created by the modernization process. Couto's literature reflects the lived experience of ordinary people and is filled with realistic images, set in a magical Mozambican rural world, that merge with the political reality and historical context of the country. The subject matter revolves around people in everyday life acts of resistance and survival in a space where the present imposed by the political power is mitigated by the symbolical presence of a magical world, suggesting an ancestral assistance and protection. Couto is adding to the national repertoire of what it means to be Mozambican by confronting the cultural hegemony imposed from above with the cultural hegemony emanating from below.

Luar-do-Chão is not a pleasant place. It is devastated, and the poverty and decadence leave no doubt that the dreams of the revolution are far from being accomplished. Reality is a horrible misery. A university student, Mariano, returns from the city to the island for his grandfather's funeral, also Mariano. The young man travels through the Madzimi River to get to the island, and that journey is a journey through time that is going to take him back to his childhood and to an ancestral time where tradition was unchallenged. The island is



engaged in the traditional funeral rites and does not seem to know him anymore, but Couto takes Mariano through a process of reacquaintance:

No quintal e no interior da casa tudo indica o enterro. Vive-se, até ao detalhe, a véspera da cerimônia. Na casa se acotovelam os familiares, vindos de todo o país. Nos quartos, nos corredores, nas traseiras se aglomeram rostos que, na maior parte, desconheço. Me olham, em silenciosa curiosidade. Há anos que não visito a Ilha. Vejo que se interrogam: eu quem sou? Desconhecem-me. Mais do que isso: irreconhecem-me. Pois eu, na circunstância, sou um aparente parente. Só o luto nos faz mesma família. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 30)

While Mariano waits for the ceremony and the proper development of the traditional rites, he witnesses and experiences strange things. He is visited by spirits; and receives letters from his dead grandfather that come from another world. These events are revelations of a traditional universe dominated by a local spirituality, and little by little, with each event Mariano learns or relearns that tradition. The more he learns about this fragile and strengthened world, the more he discovers who he is. In his journey to understand the dynamics of tradition he finds another story or history of his own life and his own land:

Manhã cedo me ergo e vou à deriva. Preciso separar-me das visões do sonho anterior. Pretendo apenas visitar o passado. Dirijo-me às encostas onde, em menino, eu pastoreava os rebanhos da família. As cabras ainda ali estão, transmalhadas. Parecem as mesmas esquecidas de morrer. Se afastam, sem pressa, dando passagem. Para elas, todo o homem deve ser pastor. Alguma razão têm. Em Luar-do-Chão não conheço quem não tenha pastoreado cabra. Ao pastoreio devo a habilidade de sonhar. Foi um pastor quem inventou o primeiro sonho. Ali, face ao nada, esperando apenas o tempo, todo o pastor entreteceu fantasias com o fio da solidão. As cabras me atiram para lembranças antigas. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 190)

Mariano connects with Luar-do-Chão, where the sacred can be found in the most prosaic thing or activity of everyday life, and where the histories of individuals are profoundly connected to the destiny of the collective and the island. The traditions, described with their rites and ethical principles, are constructed to give us the dimension of the close relationship between men and Nyumba-Kaya, the house, the genuine home, the beautiful remembrance of an earliest Africa. Like the title says, the house is the ground, the earth.

There is in this text a clear connection between memory and identity. Couto presents the journey against forgetting and in doing so he is showing us a way to renegotiate a Mozambican identity freed from the crude reductionism of identity to a political project.

This novel expresses that which threatens the local beliefs. Mariano, a modern man walking without destiny in a city where the individual existence has little importance, returns from exile to his community. Couto brings forward the confrontation between this man and the traditional religious and mythical universe, dominated by ancestral values of the community. Born on the island, but living in the city, the young man is forced by circumstances to reconsider the traditions that dominate unchallenged the community and reassert himself.

Mariano is the grandson. In a letter from his dead grandfather, Mariano receives the mission of restoring normalcy to life. There is an educational process initiated by the dead grandfather through which Mariano is going to realize that tradition is inside him, that tradition persists and is the source of everything:

Estas cartas, Mariano, não são escritos. São falas. Sentem-se, se deixe em bastante sossego e escute. Você não veio a esta Ilha para comparecer perante um funeral. Muito ao contrário, Mariano. Você cruzou essas águas por motivo de um nascimento. Para colocar o nosso mundo no devido lugar. Não veio salvar o morto. Veio salvar a vida, a nossa vida. Todos aqui estão morrendo não por doença, mas por desmérito do viver. É por isso que visitará estas cartas e encontrará não a folha escrita mas um vazio que você mesmo irá preencher, com suas caligrafias. Como se diz aqui: feridas da boca se curam com a própria saliva. Esse

é o serviço que vamos cumprir aqui, você e eu, de um e outro lado das palavras. Eu dou as vozes, você dá a escritura. Para salvarmos Luar-do-Chão, o lugar onde ainda vamos nascendo. E salvarmos nossa família, que é o lugar onde somos eternos. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 65)

Couto makes the island a primordial Mozambican space in which Mariano learns of the position that he occupies in it. Through his grandfather's guidance, Mariano is going to understand the internal dynamics of each one of his relatives and he will be transformed into the beacon of tradition that will lead his family into a liberating future. This will save Luar-do-Chão, or the country itself, and will save the family, or the Mozambican people. The degradation that Mariano finds in the island, his homeland, brings forward the cultural obliteration that Couto works so hard to denounce. The island is the last space shared by grandfather, grandson, and the family, and the funeral is the last possibility to restore a number of traditional elements that the dead grandfather depends on to finally be able to take his place in the world of the ancestors.

In 1994, Couto published Estórias abensonhadas. The author says that these stories were written after the war from a space of bitterness and hope. In that moment Couto saw the seeds, the world of possibilities for his country, and these

stories are a codification of his vision. In "Nas águas do tempo" (Estórias abensonhadas) Couto writes about an old man that takes his grandson down the river to a lake, a place of forbidden creatures. The grandfather takes the child to places that the mother does not like. She is the embodiment of the new modern Mozambican. She is the product of the revolutionary generation, the great barrier to tradition, while the grandfather is the great connector to an ancestral past. He sees the ghosts of the past that no one else is able to see. For the mother, these ghosts are an invention of the grandfather's mind. One day, when the grandfather and the grandson are in a canoe in the forbidden lake, the grandfather says that the first man that ever existed was born of a cane. This statement makes his grandson realize that he is part of an old lineage and that his world is much older than the recent past and he thinks "o primeiro homem? Para mim não podia haver homem mais antigo que o meu avô." (Estórias abensonhadas 15) This realization of a past, of an ancestry beyond the older generation, this connection to an older, local, and more organic space is embodied by Couto's work. This linkage is the main purpose of his writing. This grandfather that takes his grandson to the forbidden lake teaches him to see the "others" on the "other" bank of the lake, the ghosts of the past that live in the foggy line where

the water and time merge in eternities. The grandfather explains that

... nós temos olhos que se abrem para dentro, esses que usamos para ver os sonhos. O que aconteceu, meu filho, é que quase todos estão cegos, deixaram de ver esses outros que nos visitam. Os outros? Sim, esses que nos acenam da outra margem. E assim lhes causamos uma total tristeza. Eu levo-lhe lá nos pântanos para que você aprenda a ver. Não posso ser o último a ser visitado pelos panos. (Estórias Abensonhadas 16)

This is Couto's final goal, to eternalize the link to the past. These ghosts that live in the fog are being forgotten and if there is not a concerted effort to pass them on to the new generation they will be lost forever. Couto's literature based on traditional stories is an example of the author's commitment to recovering aspects of traditional culture, under threat of being lost through the constant insistence on Westernization, very much present in the urban areas. Couto promotes awareness of the need for validating a marginalized local cultural heritage. He encourages a drastic reversal of the official make up of Mozambicanity and it is significant that he pictures the active participation of the traditional communities.

When the grandfather in the story dies, he goes to the other bank of the lake from where he waves at his grandson.

Finally, the grandson can see this ghost waving on that bank and he at last internalizes a "we" that replaces the "others". Following his grandfather's steps he connects in a very visceral way to an old, threatened past:

... a água e o tempo são irmãos gémeos, nascidos do mesmo ventre. E eu acabava de descobrir em mim um rio que não haveria nunca de morrer. A esse rio volto agora a conduzir meu filho, lhe ensinando a vislumbrar os brancos panos da outra margem.  
(Estórias Abensonhadas 17)

After centuries of devaluation of local culture, Couto gives voice to the silenced voices of the marginalized "other". This process recovers the loss of self that occurred during the colonial period and continued in the independence process. Couto's writing demands access to and participation in society for all citizens, particularly the marginalized, and encourages cultural expression and agency.

In Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra, the dead grandfather has three sons but he does not give the mission of carrying on tradition to any of them. In fact, against the traditional prescription, the dead grandfather has decided that Mariano will officiate his last rites, taking the place of the oldest son. This is a decision that does not please everyone. The three sons had different involvement with the

different historical moments of the country and Couto portrays them as damaged by their life experiences.

The oldest son, Abstinêncio, runs from the world, minimizing all contact with everyone. He is taken by a silence that distances him even from the family. During the colonial period, he was in love and had a relationship with a married Portuguese woman that lived on the island. He waits and lives for her return. In a way, Abstinêncio yearns for the colonial order so that his love can flourish again. He has a selective memory, focusing only on the specifics of his love, but the colonial order was not only the powerless Portuguese woman who loved him, it was also her Portuguese husband, her violent husband, a man that raped and abused women. The colonial enterprise was much more than what his selective memory chooses to remember.

The second son, Mariano's father, is Fulano da Malta. We later find out that he is not Mariano's true father. Fulano da Malta had no illusions during the colonial period. He was a courageous soldier that fought for the independence of his country, relishing in the idea of a free nation, a free people, and in all the promises of the revolution:

Durante a época colonial, o pai, ao contrário dos tios, sempre se recusou a ser assimilado. Assim que soube da oportunidade para lutar pela independência



alistou-se. A quando da transição dos poderes da administração portuguesa para o governo independente, organizou-se um desfile com os ex-combatentes. A mulher, Mariavilhosa, se gabava do marido e lhe preparava o uniforme, mas Fulano despe o uniforme e fecha-se em casa. Os outros nem acreditavam que o herói libertador se sombreava no resguardo do lar, alheio ao mundo e ao glorioso momento. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 72)

He represents all of the anonymous Mozambican "fulanos" that took arms and fought for a dream but that were later left out of that dream. He lives in the melancholy of recognizing, as an ex-fighter, the end results of the war that he fought, which makes him feel like a foreigner in his own nation and in the world, and as a consequence, in his family:

Em moço se sentira estranho em sua terra. Acreditara que a razão desse sofrimento era uma única e exclusiva: o colonialismo. Mas depois veio a Independência e muito da sua despertença se manteve. E hoje comprovava: não era de um país que ele era excluído. Era estrangeiro não numa nação, mas no mundo. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 74)

The return of Mariano will force a relearning by both: the father learns to be a father and the son recognizes the pertinence of Fulano's past actions that now, after the recovery of the past, are understood.

Ultímio, the third of the three children, is the one that least understands the importance of the land, the family, and

of the traditions as a constitutive element of any man and he has nothing to pass on to his children:

- Meus filhos estão a estudar no estrangeiro, como é que você pode falar da casa deles?
- Exactamente, não posso falar nem da casa nem da vida deles. Porque seus filhos são meninos de luxo. Não cabem nesta casa que é o país todo. (Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra 77)

He is a bureaucrat that lives in the city. He is corrupt and believes that there are essential differences between him and the people on the island, including his family, that make him far more sophisticated and modern. He is in Luar-do-Chão for his father's funeral, but also to show the island to foreign investors eager to transform it in a profitable tourism complex, ignoring everyone that lives there.

Ultímio is an example of how Western influence has profoundly changed Mozambican urban life. Couto makes him an example of how the present articulations that define Mozambicans are as much the result of a colonial system as the result of a Mozambican amnesia that has produced a collective urban exile.

Couto presents us with a generation that was bruised, in one way or another, by the colonial and the revolutionary enterprise. They are unsuitable to carry on the torch that the

grandfather is passing on to Mariano, either because they do not want it or because they yearn for another reality. Couto presents them as a lost generation, disillusioned with the world they live in, destroyed by a faulty political project. They represent the missed opportunity that cannot be recovered, but Couto points out the way to start anew by reconnecting the older generation, the repository of all mozambicanity, with the younger generation, avoiding in this way all the wreckage that the three sons represent.

When the grandfather chooses his grandchild to conduct his funeral ceremony, Couto presents us with an interesting paradox. Tradition dictates that the oldest son conducts these ceremonies, but as we have seen before the three siblings seem to portray a lost generation and there is a sense of urgency in engaging the next generation, or all will be lost. This means that it is fundamental to break tradition to save tradition. Later on in the story, Mariano finds out that his grandfather was actually his father, a very well kept secret. He decides to continue to call him grandfather and not change the nature of their relationship.

In the reconstruction of identity, or by narrating identity, the author places himself in the public sphere conceiving and theorizing a place for the ones he brings forward. He thus takes on a political role, recognizing that

by writing the voices he chooses into the narrative, in this case the choices of the grandfather, he plays a part in making them visible and noticeable and facilitates their acceptance. Both "Nas águas do tempo" (Estórias abensonhadas) and in Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra, Couto conducts literary surgery in which he both culturally and historically removes the mother, in the first case, and the three sons, on the second, from the cultural and historical continuous and ties up both ends of the "cultural and historical rope" in a knot; the one end with the grandfather is tied to the other end with the grandson. The modern experience is removed and a new, amended, continuum is created. This is the resolution that Couto offers to solve the urban / rural conflict.

Mia Couto has been described many times as a "translator" of his country for the rest of the world and thus his writing is perceived as directed to the outside. I disagree with this assessment. Couto writes traditional cultural practices in a way that relies on the reader's inside knowledge of collective memory and traditional cultural practices. A reader that comes to his texts as an outsider has to rely on footnotes and explanations that clearly mark a cultural border and make that reader feel like he does not belong. This cultural border puts the Mozambican people at the center, brought to the center

from the periphery as informants and as the direct and indirect essence of his work. By using the collective memory as a frame of reference, Couto's representations of the present create an unquestionable link between memory and self. By writing and thus recuperating the collective memory, Couto's text becomes a tool to understand social identities and conflicts of contemporary Mozambican society.

Couto's work can be considered a debate of cultural self-expression, an exceptional reflection of a people's principles and hopes. In Mozambique, the target audience of these texts is not the vastly illiterate or semi-literate people depicted in these texts. The author talks to the elite, forcing it to acknowledge these people and everything that relates to their life experience, so that the elite will renegotiate its political project and allow for a more flexible Mozambican identity. His work documents social change and conflict. He uses traditional Mozambican cultures to explore the tension between history and memory and to include individual and collective memory in the literary canon, preserving what has been passed down through oral history.

Couto is committed as a writer of the unwritten, but using oral history to dispute a hegemonic construction of identity has its challenges. Through the selection of voices and the very nature of the writing, he is also selectively

creating and rhetorically producing an historical context. By portraying the elite as an outsider in its own country, effectively pushing it from the ideological center of mozambicanity and putting that estrangement in context, the author relates to the elite's own life experience in a comprehensible manner with which it can personally identify. This is a significant point because it means that a serious and important dialogue between the two groups is fostered in his work. The author is a facilitator and he is very aware of the potential of this dialogue. I believe that his intention is to challenge the structures of power and force a self-reflexivity that the elite does not seem to embrace. By including the images of ordinary people's experiences in his texts, the writer is bringing them to the urban centers, and the texts force the acknowledgement of their presence and inscribe their voice in the political process.

Couto's stories reclaim an ideological space that puts in the center people who do not inform power and are denied access to it. In this way individuals from the rural communities inform the country's historical discourse and through the author they speak directly to power. These texts become encoded narratives that reconnect to the tradition of oral history. This choice is a political endorsement by the

author of this people. Ultimately, by giving them cultural presence he empowers and gives them political agency and legitimacy. He is able to give voice to a diversity of cultural performances, political and social activities within the national space without subordinating it to an official and reductive narrative.

The author shows that the political part of identity comes from the self as social, in context, and his narratives of identity are embedded in other (oral) stories. His texts reconnect with the tradition of story-telling, conveying moralizing messages and preserving culturally specific references. The recognition for which Couto's characters fight aims at changing prejudice towards tradition and transforming the social order. Their fight becomes the defining moment in the articulation of self in relation to others; thus the fight is the determining process of obtaining identity.

In conclusion, the assumption that ethnicity was linked to political identity produced the identity politics of the elite. Couto shows that ethnic differences do not mean political differences. Respecting differences as they exist in everyday life does not mean that those differences become hard boundaries that the state needs to destroy to endure. Without

understanding that, the elite could not achieve a civic democracy.

Couto's work is characterized by an eagerness for the assertion of traditional Mozambican culture. One of the most effective approaches that the author uses is the representation of ordinary people in their everyday acts of resistance, in their everyday life experience, acknowledging that they exist and providing a new archetypal identification. Other approaches in Couto's work include the account of traditional beliefs and the assertion of traditional thought through well-known symbols.

The author regards the revolutionary experience as a disaster that needs to be removed from the center of the cultural and historical narrative, allowing the historical continuum of identity, which was so radically interrupted, to be resumed. This is a difficult political renegotiation of the national political project. In an interview Couto explained that:

Em Moçambique, mesmo que se sinta que o projeto ideal não está a ser aplicado ou que lhe fazem algumas traições, é importante assumires essa posição desiludida. Por que, se fores verdadeiro contigo próprio e meditares sobre esse percurso não te resta outra resposta senão anuíres que aprendeste muito, que viveste momentos muito belos, que te moldaram. Com todas as contradições sadias com que certamente te confrontas, essa análise mostra o



espetáculo deslumbrante da oportunidade histórica, única, de assistires à construção de uma vida diferente e de presenciareis todas as faces da vida, da cobardia ao heroísmo e às pequenas e grandes coisas do quotidiano que moldam a humanidade. Eu não troco esta experiência por coisa nenhuma. (Guerreiro 68)

Couto's work is a parallel discursive narrative where members of subordinate social groups in Mozambique express and disseminate counter discourses to articulate oppositional interpretations of their identities. Couto shows that identity is a powerful tool for survival, but it is also fragile. It is constantly changing and is easily lost because it exists only in our minds. The author views identity as rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use. This means that identity is inconsistent; people can deviate from what the government presents as normal and still participate in the national narrative. For him, culture consists of a repertoire of heterogeneous content and function.

### Chapter III

#### Speaking Portuguese and Emancipating Spaces

This chapter problematizes the work of Mia Couto focusing on the implications of the africanization of the Portuguese language and the usage of particular techniques of oral story telling that the author uses in his texts. Couto's work brings to the forefront interesting questions about the role of the Portuguese language as a state language, the role of local languages in the practice of everyday life, and the participation of this language hybridity in the construction of contemporary Mozambican identity. The Portuguese language in Mozambique exists on a historical continuity, with partial integrity and amid adaptations. I will focus on the connection between language policy and the production and execution of political and social power in the post-independence, multi-ethnic state of Mozambique, and how it is related to aspects of government discourse and the hegemonic power aspirations of the political elite.

Focusing on language as cultural capital, this chapter explores the dissonances and consequences of social and institutional practices, in terms of language planning and

hegemony in the multilingual context of Mozambique. Pierre Bourdieu defines the concept of cultural capital as the combination of information, practices and associations that one accumulates throughout one's life which enables the success of those individuals who have a more experienced and varied background over those who possess this combination to a lesser degree.

Mozambique has 17 million people and the vast majority belong to the Bantu linguistic group. Only a minority has studied Portuguese. This minority is mainly an urban, socio-economically privileged group in terms of education, social mobility, and the ability to relate to the political and social processes of the country. Yet the state, within its official functions, continues to speak in Portuguese, even during the post colonial period, to this multicultural nation with an impressive linguistic diversity. Couto states that:

o português foi sempre aceite em Moçambique, acho que nunca foi um sujeito de discussão, as pessoas sempre o aceitaram como língua oficial. Acho também que nunca se questionou se é ou não uma língua nacional. De facto, acho que o português é a única língua que pode fazer circular Moçambique dentro de Moçambique. As outras línguas são regionalismos. É preciso pensar que Moçambique é um país que tem uma grande fragmentação lingüística que, claro, corresponde também a uma fragmentação étnica. Algumas crianças urbanizadas, por exemplo, não falam português. Outro problema é a crescente influência do inglês. (Apa 55)

In this context, the Portuguese language is in effect a connector in Mozambique. However, when the Portuguese language became the lingua franca, this decision adjourned *sine die* the discussion about the unity of the Mozambican nation. Portuguese has been very successful in occupying this space. In "Language Policy in Mozambique: a taboo?", Armando Jorge Lopes writes:

Realistically, the Portuguese language is and will most likely be, in our lifetime, the national lingua franca, that is a language for communication among Mozambicans who speak different mother tongues. (Lopes 493)

The entire state apparatus expressed itself in Portuguese, for example, in the media and in schools, and this privileging of the Portuguese language over all others had a profound effect. Portuguese language started to penetrate into aspects of the lives of Mozambicans that had never been "occupied" before, not even during the colonial rule. It became the second, third, sometimes fourth language spoken by a large number of the population that used it to communicate to people from different ethnic communities.

In relation to language and the assertion of one's individuality, it is fundamental to understand that ideas are built in specific languages, and many would argue that ideas determine social relations. Consequently, the language of production and circulation of ideas is the essence of the

survival of a society. We cannot separate questions of language and writing from questions of power and values. Therefore, the problem Couto's work addresses is that if the majority of Mozambicans express their emotions and thoughts in their local languages far better than in Portuguese yet they have been essentially coerced into using Portuguese to express themselves in everyday life, what does this, what does this language dynamic do to their identities as Mozambicans? In my opinion, Couto's work, through the critique of this status quo and the recovery of traditional cultural practices to the literary discourse, has a strong pedagogical component because his text is positioned between the modern and urban space, and the rural and traditional space, both with their own specific social processes. The author becomes a "translator" between them promoting an exchange that has as its ultimate goal of fostering a better understanding.

In this context, both the unity and community of Mozambique are fragile and constantly in flux, due to the competing or even conflicting language claims of state-sanctioned Portuguese and localized, indigenous languages. As a result, these claims, then, create their own versions of Mozambican identity. As the official language of Mozambique, the Portuguese language started to occupy new spaces in the lives of Mozambicans and found new confrontations in various cultural contexts in the

territory. In these new spaces, the Portuguese language lives in a parallel linguistic dimension to everyday practices, in many cases behind a second or third language, and as such, practiced in specific contexts and by these non native speakers, the Portuguese language incorporated different local cultural realities and traditions, particular to each of these spaces.

A language is, ultimately, a struggle between contexts and meanings and those that define the language and the register of the political, social, economical and cultural discourses are in fact controlling the rules of the game. European languages continue to play an important role in the enforcement of social rules and political control in Africa. Portuguese is the language of the Mozambican state and, as such, it is an imprint that the colonial past has left, even after the independence from formal colonial rule.

The maintenance of the Portuguese language as the official language perpetuated the position of privilege of the Portuguese-speakers over the non-speakers. As a result of these policies, from 1975 to 1988, the number of Portuguese speakers in Mozambique rose from 25% to 60%. The impact is quite noticeable, but the use of standard Portuguese is only by the privileged of urban elite and it is generally spoken only by a minority of the population in competition with the local languages.

As the language of the state apparatus, many religious faiths, the media, school instruction, and of many other experiences in the life of a person, Portuguese becomes a language of prestige; it is the language of power; and it is fundamental for real social, economic, and political mobility in the country. It is also the only language of literary production. In an interview with the Brazilian magazine Língua Portuguesa, Couto himself illustrates this situation when asked if there is literature being produced in Mozambique in a language other than Portuguese:

Houve uma tentativa, mas fracassou. Foram publicados dois livros em tsonga, e disseram que venderam menos de dez exemplares cada. Não basta só a oferta, é preciso um trabalho de base que tem de passar pela escola, pela fixação da língua escrita. (Pereira Junior, online)

The Portuguese language expresses all technological, scientific and developmental knowledge. As such, it is the fundamental tool of the manifestations of the hegemonic culture that controls all the social and intellectual production in the country, in which the Portuguese language has a central role.

Yet, Couto writes against the naturalization of the European norm of the Portuguese language exposing this construction as artificial. Instead, the author promotes an articulation that takes into account more than one voice, more than just a Portuguese language voice and linguistic

tradition, and that seeks the reconciliation of traditional cultures with the complex system of progress, and in the production of ideas and real, everyday life practices, demonstrating points of contact between various social actors in his texts. Couto portrays the possibility of a state as a pluralist agent articulating the process of integrating the different populations, even at the linguistic level.

Cultural practices in Portuguese have taken on the appearance of independence from the colonial authority, but are still signifiers of colonial desire and discipline, and allow for effective governmental control of cultural production. This is a deceptive idea of independence, but Couto's work represents an alternative to accomplish true independence of the cultural practices through the breakdown of the European norm of the language. Because the Mozambican state chose to maintain the Portuguese language as a means of social and political interaction and cultural distribution, it is in fact controlling the officially recognized cultural production in the country. The hegemony of the Portuguese language is then, in a very real sense, comparable to the control of ideas, and more pointedly, the control of people's minds.

As in colonial times, Portuguese is the only language used for written communication and the media. When talking



about the space of local languages in Mozambican life,  
Patrick Harries wrote the following:

Portuguese was pushed by colonial administrators and assimilationist African nationalists grouped around the newspaper Brado Africano. They saw the European language as a means of social and political integration and discouraged the teaching of Ronga in schools. (Harries 51)

The only space for the mediated use of other languages is radio, but even in this realm, Portuguese is dominant and transmissions in local languages are to a large degree translations of programs previously transmitted in Portuguese. Still, for the majority of Mozambicans, Portuguese is a second language and it is used on different levels of fluency and language varieties.

When the Portuguese arrived in this part of the world and established the economic control of the region the Portuguese language came with them. To foster the commerce with the locals, a strategic intermediary group of bilingual speakers acted as a connector between the two communities. This experience of co-existence gave origin to a group of "assimilados." During the Portuguese colonial rule, assimilation to Portuguese culture was fostered by the regime and the expansion of the Portuguese language was one of its main devices.

In 1930, the Portuguese government published the "Acto Colonial" that proclaimed that it was an imperative of the Portuguese nation to colonize other territories and to "civilize" the local people. The process of "civilizing" implied that the locals had to speak Portuguese and to dress in a western manner. The assimilated were protected by the colonial regime and were given positions of power that made them the intermediary in a hierarchical pyramid of settler, assimilated, and non-assimilated; while the latter were victims of repressive policies and persecution.

Later on, this population of *assimilados*, many of whom were educated in Western countries, organized the local populations in the fight against the Portuguese colonial rule in the fifties and sixties. The anti-colonial movement included several sectors of the black population, but it had a large number of assimilated, non-blacks and whites, who spoke directly to the colonizer. Portuguese became the language of the revolution. It was used at meetings and rallies, and when people did not speak Portuguese they were addressed through interpreters. The Mozambican anguish needed no translation; it spoke the language of the oppressor.

It was this same revolutionary group that, after independence, seized power and still chose the Portuguese language as the state's official language, effectively establishing the hegemonic position that the language now

occupies in the lives of Mozambicans. At every stage of the revolution, Frelimo emphasized the single Mozambican nation. Portuguese was adopted as the national language to that end. The colonial state spoke Portuguese and expected the colonial subaltern to answer in the same language. The independent Mozambican state took a similar stance, promoting the learning of the Portuguese language on a scale that not even the colonial authority had ever had the audacity to implement.

In this context, how then, can cultural practices in Portuguese possibly even appear independent from the colonial rule? Couto's work shows that they, indeed, can not. Couto's literature deliberately makes visible political repressive practices and associations. He exposes the involvement of the Portuguese language with narratives of citizenship, with the articulation of assimilation projects by the modern Mozambican state, and with challenging all other possibilities of Mozambican unity.

A collective cultural identity is usually considered central to the survival of a nation-state. In Mozambique, at the time of independence, the several ethnic groups that lived in the country had very little in common, except for the revolutionary war and the fact that they were all part of the same political state. The establishment of the Portuguese language as a supra-ethnic element of the collective cultural identity was then a political

instrumentalization of the language planning in the country, meaning it became a tool the state could use to exercise power over its people.

The European norm was recognized as the standard, but this policy undermined the transformative action that the different Mozambican cultures had over the Portuguese language. This norm operated within a dynamic of subversion and rejection. In Couto's work, the Portuguese language is locally appropriated. This appropriation adapts the language's standard uses and constructs to the demands and needs of the Mozambican society, and forcefully rejects the political power of standard Portuguese. Couto demonstrates that the Portuguese language, even when imposed, was not received in a passive way and it went through an acculturation and complex process of syncretism that meant adaptations, reinterpretations and recreations, transforming it in something other than the imported standard. Like the author writes in Terra sonâmbula:

Nas suas mãos estão papéis que me parecem familiares. Me aproximo e, com sobressalto, confirmo: são os meus cadernos. Então, com o peito sufocado, chamo: *Gaspar!* E o menino estremece como se nascesse por uma segunda vez. De sua mão tombam os cadernos. Movidas por um vento que nascia não do ar mas do próprio chão, as folhas se espalham pela estrada. Então as letras, uma por uma, se vão convertendo em grãos de areia e, aos poucos, todos meus escritos se vão transformando em páginas de terra. (Couto 218)

Couto writes the territorialization of the language through transformative action that implies ownership over it. The author's texts have a profusion of agglutinations and juxtapositions that are a direct result of this territorialization. His writing is also creative, innovative, musical, profoundly poetic and directly engaged with the oral story telling tradition of the different communities in the country. Couto, then, not only expresses the transformative actions upon the language performed by local people, but by putting a large number of regional varieties in contact through his text and taking his own poetic liberty with them, he creates a poetic language unique to Mozambique, in which several ethnolects compete for space in a negotiation of a new local variety of Portuguese. This poetic language is also the vehicle to express the cultural referential world of the local oral story-telling tradition. The language he uses to express himself is infused with multicultural content essential for cultural survival.

In Couto's writing, local cultures are built into the Portuguese language. His work is a subjective and collective literature, in the construction of which the language plays a crucial role. In his literature, language and culture are in a process of incorporation. The Portuguese language is, in Couto's texts, primordially infused with the local cultures.

The author's poetic language includes not just the societies of which the Portuguese language has become a constituent, in particular the rural ones, but also their non-physical, religious, mythological and "other" worlds. This is an ingenious and resourceful method of adapting the Portuguese language by interweaving it with the local perceptions regarding the physical and non-physical world that centers on the conception of a linguistic-cultural system. By opposing the imposition of language as a unifying force, which in the long run endangers and promotes the eradication of local languages and cultures, Couto uses poetic language to exert a great power in forming people into a group and producing an inclusive and non-menacing coherent cultural unit. In an interview with Ignacio Cabria, Couto talks about this poetic language, and the reasons why he chose it:

La poesía es una apuesta personal, pero es que también es la única manera de transportar al papel esa magia, esa noción de lo fantástico que existe en la realidad mozambiqueña y en la oralidad, en la forma como los relatos tradicionales se procesan. Yo nací en una ciudad, Beira, donde siempre hubo una intersección entre la ciudad de cemento y los suburbios, y por tanto tuve desde niño esa experiencia de contacto con otra cultura, otra condición social, otra raza. Yo hablaba desde pequeño la lengua local, el xi-sena, y recuerdo que me sentaba a escuchar las historias de los viejos; historias que son importantes, no desde el punto de vista literario y estético, sino porque la historia contada oralmente representa un momento fundamental de la transmisión de todos los valores morales y sociales.[...] Así que cuando se

habla de pasar de la oralidad a la escritura hay que encontrar no sólo un hilo conductor entre los temas, sino también entre las formas, y ahí no veo otro curso que no sea la poesía. En mi caso uní la poesía a un trabajo de desconstrucción de la lengua portuguesa, pero subordinado a una preocupación poética. (Cabria 71)

Besides his childhood experiences, which give him incredible insight into local cultures, Couto was able to conceive a cultural unity (although composed by several unstable elements in an on-going competition) because -- in addition to being a writer -- Couto is also a journalist and an important biologist in Mozambique. He has worked with several projects of environmental preservation in several parts of the country, which allowed him to travel extensively in Mozambique. This work also has allowed him contact with the most diverse, local registers of the Portuguese language. In his writing, Couto recovers these spontaneous and uninhibited popular transformative actions into literary discourse. Couto is very clear when he characterizes his relation to the Portuguese language:

A Língua oficial tem de romper com o estatuto de oficialidade para se tornar uma língua de expressão plena, de tradução da intimidade. Os que pensam que isso só é possível se se agride a africanidade estão cativos de uma atitude estética. Afinal é preciso acreditar que os africanos, ao adoptarem uma língua europeia, não ficam em posição de inferioridade, a sua cultura originária é mais forte. Ao se apropriar de uma segunda língua essa cultura vai esvaziá-la, vai moldar nela o seu sabor. (Saute 231)

Couto clearly feels no threat in this appropriation. Language is an important source of power since people use it to give meaning to their reality. In the transformative actions and the changes of value and symbolism of the Portuguese language, distinct strategies are involved. Couto's usage of the Portuguese language as spoken in the most diverse spaces in Mozambique is a counter-hegemonic strategy that pushes from the center of national identity, or marginalizes, the colonial and the revolutionary heritages that promoted the European norm. It brings to the center of national identity the fusion of the Portuguese language with all the other Mozambican languages with which came it has into contact, and by which it has been transformed. This fusion is a multiplicity of intersections of identity, which lives with and through difference, and not in spite of it. This means that the deliberate choice Couto makes to use this hybrid language has a political and ideological implications.

The process of infiltration, institution, and appropriation of the Portuguese language in Mozambique reflects different approaches within relations of power. In the first stage, the Portuguese language was part of the settler / colonized relation and as such it was an instrument of imperial power and domination. As stated above, it was within this logic of power that the need for economic development fostered the creation of a local elite



with technical and administrative knowledge. In Mozambique, this gave origin to a native, urban elite that later would promote and direct the fight against the colonial power and for Mozambican independence. It was through the Portuguese language that many Mozambicans express their discontent and called on their fellow countrymen to join in the fight. In "Lusophone Literature in Africa: Language and Literature in Portuguese-Writing Africa," Russell G. Hamilton writes about the awkwardness of this position:

The awakening of a collective, nationalist consciousness coincided with the *de facto* practice, and eventually the official policy of *assimilação*. As members of the intellectual elites were beginning to analyze the exploitation of the masses of the "unassimilated," they were discovering that their own command of Portuguese was the principal measure of their relatively advantaged status in the existing colonial system. They found themselves in the awkward posture of simultaneously rejecting their acculturated status, while using it as a means of cultural resistance. (Hamilton, Lusophone Literature in Africa: Language and Literature in Portuguese-Writing Africa 316)

Although, at first the Portuguese language was used by the colonialist power as an instrument of repressive imposition towards the African natives, later the Portuguese language became an emancipation instrument. This was due to the fact that an elite of African natives appropriated and mastered the Portuguese language. Many of the revolutionary leaders were young intellectual assimilated or mulattos who

had studied in European universities, where they were educated according to Western models, values and revolutionary ideals. The liberators of the nation were a direct result of colonization itself. They were not a racial, cultural or ethnic unity. They communicated in the language of the colonizer that they had just expelled, and it was clear to them that they were able work through their differences due to the common language and culture that the colonial regime left behind. In another article Russell G. Hamilton addresses this issue in the context of literary production in Lusophone Africa:

To put matters into historical perspective, during the liberation struggle, the majority of socially conscious Lusophone African writers, even those who embraced the most romantic form of cultural revindication or spoke out with the most militant protest poetry, did not renounce Portuguese as the language of African nationalist, literary expression. What many did do, however, was apply a kind of political litmus test to those who would presume to be or whom others would characterize as writers of Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique. (Hamilton, Lusophone Literature in Africa: Lusofonia, Africa, and Matters of Languages and Letters 330)

Portuguese was a language that cut across ethnicity and cultural particulars. Some Lusophone Africans referred to the Portuguese language as a trophy of war to be used in the best interest of the state. The nationalistic discourse of anti-tribalism and anti-ethnic group that I analyzed in the

second chapter, and that the elite imposed afterwards, was a direct product of colonialism.

The Portuguese language was part of the articulation of this discourse and it was also the unifying force that was put above all differences. The language of unity amongst revolutionary fighters was also the language of education, literary creation, media, and government. The language attained an institutionalized status of neutrality in a country where the usage of local languages had unwanted political implications. Even Couto states that:

Não sei se se poderá dizer isso, mas o português é, de facto, uma das únicas garantias da unidade e da manutenção daquele país com as fronteiras que tem e como projecto que vem de mesmo antes da independência. Parece paradoxal, mas é preciso recorrer a qualquer coisa estrangeira (entre aspas) para se construir a identidade nacional. Ela se constrói muito por confronto, por contraste com outros países que estão nas margens de Moçambique e todos eles falam inglês. (Apa 55)

I believe that this is an important issue because at the heart of the Mozambican language planning is the conviction that multilingualism turns into conflict when it is compounded with unequal social status and hierarchic standings of the several linguistic groups within the state, and that by promoting a single language recognized as foreign by all groups, the potential for conflict was diminished. Couto shows how this was a failed plan and takes it a step further.

When Couto started to publish in 1981, recovering innovations to the literary cannon the transformative actions of popular discourse, he became a dissonant voice in what seemed like an ideal arrangement. Many of Couto's critics were educated in the West and their referential point of European modernity dissociates them from their local heritage. Couto's work is a rupture with that conception. Using the transformative actions Couto brings the tribal and ethnic ghost to the center of his work. Couto is questioning the role of the Portuguese language, which looks much like the old colonial role, against which all fought so hard to dismantle.

Couto's work makes the foreignness of the language become familiar and directly connected to everyday life and the exercise of power. The Portuguese used in Mozambique is in the process of developing characteristics of a separate form of Portuguese. Like Couto himself says:

Hablando desde Mozambique, ¿por qué no hablar de una construcción del portugués? Porque lo que estoy haciendo es usar materiales que los varios pueblos que componen Mozambique me entregan y que resultan de su manera de tratar con el portugués. Ellos desmenuzan el idioma en pedazos y lo moldean como si no estuviese creado. Tenemos pues un proceso de amoldamiento de una lengua europea a una cultura africana, que creo que para el escritor es una fonte inagotable. (Cabria 72)

The africanization of the Portuguese language due to the permanent confrontation with other registers and

languages that Couto recovers to the literary cannon is evidence of the political positioning of the author in relation to the language policies used in the development of a national identity in the post-colonial moment. Couto's literature, the way he uses the popular register of Portuguese is, on the one hand a criticism of the privileged position the European norm of the language has had in the articulation of Mozambican identity and of a Mozambican literary canon, and on the other hand a questioning of concepts of cultural property by breaking down the linkage between language, identity and the ownership of the Portuguese language. By actively renegotiating the language, Mozambicans are asserting ownership over it in his texts.

The elite regarded the main task of the state to be to extinguish its internal cultural borders. This is the background for the role of the Portuguese language in Mozambique, but the complexity of the country does not stop there. Several of the major Mozambican languages are also spoken in the neighboring countries. Cultural and linguistic links do not stop at borders, and identity is much more linked to a community of tradition and language than to the identity associated with the Portuguese language that the majority does not speak. The normative power of the Portuguese language is then an instrument of power, as well as its own symbolic value, that tries to produce new

loyalties different from the traditional communities. Recognizing that Mozambican nationalism is not a fundamental force behind the different groups present in the country, the elite conceived an imposition that uses the deceit of national sovereignty and unity to hide the new manifestation of real power in the political national hegemony.

The nation-state binary was the goal of independent Mozambique because it was expected to reduce the internal differences and bring Mozambicans together united in national identity. Fusion replaces fission. This meant that one sign of modernization instigated by the forceful production of the nation-state binary is the loss of languages and cultural differences.

The European standard of the Portuguese language is used by the members of the higher social strata, while the rest of the population negotiated the several ethnolects through the re-signification and development of new forms, and the incorporation and re-conception of elements from local languages. These varieties of the Portuguese language are used in particular for communication outside the ethnic-linguistic group, while the local native languages are used within the ethnic group.

The elite wanted, through the imposition of the Portuguese language, to promote the formation of a unified identity in the Mozambican territory and the help to

crystallize the stratification of groups of people and levels of language, and their access to power through the differential usage of the language. There is a direct relation between social status, language knowledge and practice in Mozambican society.

Couto's work doesn't follow this logic. By not using an aesthetic of the revolution and extracting from the everyday Mozambican Portuguese speaker the "norm" of his literary discourse, Couto is simultaneously challenging the revolution as the source of all cultural heritage and dissociating from the idea of ownership of the Portuguese language that forced an adherence to a foreign norm.

Couto privileges, in written text, the practices of specific agents and groups over the Portuguese language in Mozambique, while at the same time taking his own personal attitude towards this issue very clearly. The author reconstructs in his texts the significance and relation, mediated by language, between socially determined subjects and the collective. Couto reveals how the language planning in Mozambique is the identity forming foundation of an ideological project. Couto's work is, then, the author's (and the populations' that speak through his work) resistance to that hegemonic project. This resistance is accomplished by the specific selection by the author of a popular register of the language over the European norm,

indicating a preference for this register in the social domain.

There are then several instances in which Couto's work puts him at odds with the national narrative promoted by the government.

First, both Couto and the state recognize languages as one of the key elements of both socio-cultural identity and social policies in Mozambique. For the state it is at the center of the organization of a single authority in an independent state and of its relation with the territory, the practices of that authority, the educational project and progress. For Couto, however, it is intimately related to questions of assertion of one's individuality, recognition, union and community participation. In a society so diverse like the Mozambican it is fundamental to take into consideration adjustment to competing or even conflicting claims and principles for Mozambique to create its own identity.

Second, the language policies in Mozambique demonstrate that the government plans a Mozambican identity created by the Portuguese language. This reinforces the political role of the Portuguese language. In the organization of a single authority in the state, the language assumed an instrumental role in the national unity. The idea behind choosing Portuguese was the conviction that electing any of the local



languages would challenge the unity of the state because the other communities would feel diminished or non-represented. I believe that this is a deceptive argument. The Portuguese colonial policies recognized in the language a tool for domination and so did the Mozambican elite that occupied the place of the colonial power and, as Couto points out, recreated the colonial model because it was in their best interest.

Third, as we have seen in the first chapter, the political elite in Mozambique draws its legitimacy from the Mozambican revolution. Art was to be at the service of that revolution. Right after independence, the artistic medium was produced with propagandistic messages incorporating revolutionary, socialist, and iconographical elements. In Mozambique, according to the governmental planning, the artist had political awareness and openness to revolutionary, socialist change. Art became in itself symbol of revolutionary change and the Portuguese language, performed according to the European norm was the vehicle of that message. Couto challenges this idea and has consistently put himself in direct opposition to the results of the Marxist policies brought about by the revolution. This has put him at odds with other Mozambican writers that accuse him of not serving the revolution, but Couto's power as a story teller is precisely the dodging of ideological constraints.

Finally, the permanent confrontation between the several cultural and linguistic contexts and the Portuguese language results in the enrichment of the language through the incorporation of multiple linguistic and cultural registers in the everyday performance of the language. This performance is done as a cosmological vision of the world substantially different from the European and it gives origin to re-interpretations and adaptations both in terms of the syntax and morphology of the language. We can affirm, based on Couto's work that a local but unstable Mozambican norm is starting to take shape, even if unpredictable and regional in range.

In the case of Mozambique, the space of the nation is a racial, linguistic and social construction that encloses the limits of national culture and marginalizes parts of the population that do not fit and do not accept the naturalization of the formula that has been used to promote integration. Naturalization is the process that redirects something back to what would be considered its "natural" state. It is the admission, assimilation, or adoption of a foreign set of values that may change over time or be politically singled out for the benefits of one elite. When considering the process of naturalization, it is necessary not only to study what is being naturalized to, but also

what one has been naturalized, and possibly been exiled from.

Couto is not making a construction that goes against the ultimate project of ethnic integration of the government but that rather goes against the strategy that the government has use. He proposes this new project of language policy that comes from the bottom up, giving voice to millions in the process of creating the ideological outline of a modern Mozambican identity.

When Couto subverts the dominant discourse through local independent practices of liberty, he suggests a new means of constructing the articulation of nation, national, and nationalized through a more organic process (if social constructions can ever be considered organic). In the case of Mozambique, the political project imposed from above ignores the reality of the country, in particular when it comes to languages.

Couto does not fit in the posture of other post-colonial writers and political activists from several parts of Africa, when it comes to the imposition of colonial languages, and that defend the complete return to the use of African native languages as a mean of production of African literatures. For Couto, the Portuguese language is the most practical alternative. The usage of the colonial language promotes the communication between the different Portuguese-speaking countries, but it also performs a renegotiation of

the colonial past through the estrangement produced by the transformation of the European standard in the new literary forms. With Couto, the interpenetration between the different languages reaches new extremes. The author reveals the allegorical power of the language and its normative value - the legitimate construction of new meanings is the result of the crossing of several borders.

The Portuguese language in the work of Couto lives in between two fundamentally opposed approaches in relation to the question of language in post-colonial literatures. On the one hand, Couto's option faces the resistance of the nativist movement that defends the return to African native languages as a vehicle of national expression and the total abandonment of European literary standards and languages to produce and express a real African experience. On the other hand, Couto faces the mistrust of the movement that defends the maintenance of the European languages for economic reasons and as a way to promote the unity in the African states.

Both these perspectives look at Couto's language proposal as unacceptable. For the nativists, the africanization of the Portuguese language presented by Couto represent a rendition of the African writer to the European imposition. Couto's text represents the defeat of the return to the genuine African cultural product. Other authors perceive it to an ongoing exploitation and reenactment of

the colonizer - colonized relationship, not recognizing any autonomy to this literature. One example is Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o who writes in the introduction to Decolonising the Mind the following:

If in these essays I criticize the Afro-European (or Euro-African) choice of linguistic praxis, it is not to take away from the talent and the genius of those who have written in English, French or Portuguese. On the contrary I am lamenting a neocolonial situation which has meant the European bourgeoisie once again stealing our talents and geniuses as they have stolen our economies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe stole art treasures from Africa to decorate their houses and museums; in the twentieth century Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. (Thiong'o xii)

For the perspective that defends the utilization of European languages does not accept the Africanized form of Portuguese, the Portuguese that got imbued with local performance and was transformed. It perceives it as reducing the performance of the language by the African agent to an inferior corrupted version of the "real language," as if the African agent were incapable of using the European language at the same level of sophistication as the European colonizer.

I believe that both of these positions and based on concepts of purity with which I disagree and that I consider problematic. The nativists failed to recognize a process of appropriation and of agency over the Portuguese language

done by the population and expressed by Couto's work. This perspective is also rooted in the idea of a pure African past, free of influences and interactions, which is a truly against the historical context of the continent, in particular of Mozambique.

On the other hand, the movement that defends the purity in the usage of the European language fails to recognize that the norm of a language is a standard that is by nature always outdated and being renegotiated, and that the standard of the language and the popular register are not mutually excluding. The speakers of a language are the ones that inform the state and the language of the local cosmovision of the world. In this sense, the Portuguese language is in the Mozambican space a language that was transformed, that rooted itself and that does not need foreign legitimization.

Couto's work is a production that challenges the primary definers of the Mozambican identity, and it is because of that that his work is uncomfortable for both the nativist and the European standards postures. The preservation of the Portuguese language in its "pure" state is connected to social, economic and cultural privilege of the Mozambican elite that by preserving the language preserves also an important cultural capital.

Writing the traditional collective memory, Couto's texts are an important exam of Mozambican modern society.

The traditional culture is expressed in a Portuguese that requires from the reader a participative knowledge, an understanding of the language in the social context in which the writing was produced, an experience of the culture that the language expresses.

A true definition of Mozambicanity has to recognize the gradual fusion of discursive forms that include ancestral transformative elements of the local cultures. This indiscipline at the level of the language recovered by Couto gives origin to texts that challenge the literary cannon and renegotiates the bases of all literary tradition inherited and written by Mozambican writers.

Far from being something that can be simply ignored or discarded, the Portuguese language is where Couto works through the identitary problems that the independent Mozambique faces. He presents the Mozambicans that have been obstructed from doing it for themselves. Through language people not only describe the world but also understand themselves. For Couto, to write in an africanized Portuguese, or inscribing Africa in the language, is a way to present an alternative aesthetic that valorizes, through subversion.

With Couto, the rhetoric of the pure identity gives place to a welcomed and celebrated "contamination." Couto denies obedience to any foreign norm. The "contamination" is then in Couto's work a way for the marginalized to recover

the center. It's the author that frees the language from the colonial authority. He writes spontaneously the transfer of discursive practices exclusively Mozambican to the body of the Portuguese language processed in the social practice of the language in the Mozambican every day life.

Couto gives form to a combination without precedents of African and European, going beyond concepts of imposition, assimilation, cultural mimeses, subversion and giving origin to a unique Mozambique in his texts. The author opens a space of resistance recovering African languages and the images, myths, and stories associated to them, and it is in this space that Mozambicans became free as post-colonial subjects. His imaginative literature is the literature of the double agent because it is captive of the language of the colonizer, but in their own terms, making Mozambique a textual presence and not a simple object. He writes about those that history has annihilated and transfigured, recovering the dispersion and promoting the re-memorization.

Language is the filter through which an individual attributes meaning to the world, and in every culture the system of meanings of reality is different. Mozambique is formed by several linguistic and ethnic groups. The Portuguese used by Couto in his work is then an encounter with the diversity of Mozambican life. Couto usage of the register of Portuguese that he hears from the people on the streets is then a challenge of the language planning of the



government, with the difference that, while the elite realized the supra-ethnic space for the Portuguese language, Couto nationalizes the language bringing to his texts many regional forms that function as a kind of linguistic tension between the several registers. The transformative potential of the Portuguese language operated by the people brings to the language a recognition rooted in the regional, cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences. Beneath Couto's work is than the ideological choice of making all the parts constituent and integrated in the national whole.

By using this africanized Portuguese Couto is transmitting a political message. He creates through his literature a nationalistic Mozambicanity. It is an unequivocal insurgence and resistance to the institutionalized status of the Portuguese language. This is then a differentiation of the culture of the colonizer and the attempt to capture a local identity. This exercise that Couto makes with literature is directed to the elite, which comprises the vast majority of potential readers in Mozambique, and not the majority of local language speakers who are usually illiterate.

Couto's work keeps aspects of the colonial culture central for the existence of Mozambique, at the same time manipulating and using them as the base for an independent culture. Couto writes, not a copy of the colonial, but a cultural space on its own, where transformative actions

expose the uncertainties and the ambivalences of the colonial text and deny it an authorizing and legitimizing presence. As a result, Couto's textual insubordination against the discourse of the cultural authority interrogates the Portuguese language itself. Couto subverts the narratives of power and dominant culture through a series of inclusions and exclusions that impregnate his texts, and by the recovery subjects excluded from the dominant literary narrative. Couto's work is a counter-narrative to the official narrative, a critique of the literary canon and of the exclusion of the local narratives and subjects that it promotes.

Couto's literature is a local, Mozambican literature that, although it problematizes Westernized questions, affirms the local culture and reestablishes the focus on the overlooked process of cultural inscription of local realities and traditions into the matrix of the Portuguese language. Couto's text show how the Portuguese language shapes and is shaped by the lived experiences of the populations. The language embodies non-western cultural traditions, foregrounding non-western narrative structures strongly influenced by the fertile and millenary oral literature that preserved ancestral perspectives and relationships to the world that surrounds it. This alternative aesthetics values the traditional systems of belief, that, as we saw in chapter two, have been under

constant menace of being erased from the political and literary discourse. Couto's work frees the Portuguese language of its European cultural attire and dresses it up with Mozambican local cultures, and this gives space to break with the European norm.

## Chapter IV

### Ideological Loyalties: Constructing New Inclusive

### Definitions for Mozambican Identity

This chapter problematizes the inclusion of Mozambique's racial minorities in the paradigm of national identity. I will defend that Couto writes the deterritorialization of these minorities during the colonial period and, after freeing the paradigm of national identity from the trappings of racial implications. Couto writes the process of transculturation through which the racial minorities go from a space of "unbelonging" to an *entre-lugar*, allowing them to reterritorialize, meaning, to create a direct linkage between cultural identity and the local. I will then problematize how the reterritorialized minorities become a segment of the Mozambican cultural landscape, and how in that context Couto writes the process of cultural convergence that in the future will give origin to a post-racial cultural integration. Finally, I will consider how the author is engaged in the construction of an identity paradigm that creates a space for

himself, and how this is a conscious ideological choice that the author clearly states in parts of his work and interviews.

One of the major features of Couto's literature is the concern with place and displacement and the pervasive focus on myths of identity and authenticity. It is here that the renegotiation of identity comes into being, especially for the racial minorities, concerned with developing an effective identification relationship between self and place.

The practices and identities that Couto writes are counter-narratives that continually evoke and erase totalizing paradigms and disrupt ideological constraints through which communities are given essentialized identities. Couto uses literature as a counter-hegemonic political space in which racial minorities have created interconnected but autonomous spaces.

In the transition from colonialism to nationhood, as portrayed in Couto's writing, the inclusion of racial minorities in the Mozambican identity paradigm does not mean a fear of loss of identity for the black population. On the contrary, it reveals the reterritorialization of the racial minorities to the country. Clearly, a nation is something more than a conglomerate of co-existing racial and ethnic groups,

and Couto fosters a new and local culture that connects rather than separates the different segments of society.

Heritage combines narratives of continuity and cultural property with a powerful and problematic racial connotation. The national heritage discourse is reproductive, a passing down of cultural property. Heritage identity involves a renunciation of agency. Couto reclaims agency and attacks the mono-racial authority of heritage identity that reintroduces a deterministic racial element into Mozambican national identity. Heritage imposes on history a false continuity and I will demonstrate how Couto challenges this hegemonic construction.

To be black does not make you a Mozambican. As we have seen in previous chapters, many Mozambicans in positions of power are more white / Westernized than the Portuguese settlers ever were. They are ideologically white, in the sense of non-African, deprived of African ancestry on a pure intellectual level. One can even argue that through the eyes of a well traveled white man like Couto one can see Mozambique better than through the eyes of the black Mozambican elite.

Couto is ideologically creating a new paradigm for the Mozambican national identity, where loyalty and respect for the cultural ancestry of the nation, the traditional culture, are absolutely fundamental. We can see how important the

loyalty to this new hegemony is for Couto when we look at the portrayal of different races in his work. This paradigm is based on an ideological construction that crosses racial lines. In this country, where several minorities are present, a paradigm of the nation can only be achieved by consciously integrating them. The sense of belonging is achieved by an adherence to this new hegemonic ideology and not by ethnic or racial recognition.

His images and stories of ethnic interaction contribute to the construction of a contemporary, diverse Mozambican imaginary. Couto aims to assess the representations of these interactions as racialized texts that both reflect and contribute to a new version of multiculturalism that includes more than just the African elements. The author's texts deal with discursive representations of race that imply a vision of racial integration, while criticizing cultural partition.

Couto opposes the hegemony of historical representations, and because he has access to the counter-power of literary production that resides within those representations, he is presenting the idea that the ethnic / racialized other should speak to the national narrative, provided that he goes through a process of reterritorialization. The question is if a text written by a white Mozambican that addresses a predominantly black audience has any kind of traditional quality, meaning a

recognizable reference to tradition in order to be an authentic expression of traditional culture. Considering the role of the intellectual in the post-colonial reality, in relation to national identity, Stuart Hall offers presents pertinent issues that help to put Couto's work in perspective:

Is it only a matter of unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid, bringing to light the hidden continuities it suppressed? Or is a quite different practice entailed – not the rediscovery but the production of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past? (Hall 52)

The question becomes: Can a white Mozambican be the agent of the production of a new identity paradigm? Discussing Mozambican literature and the race of Mozambican writers, Lourenço Rosário has written that "os escritores moçambicanos herdaram uma realidade sócio-cultural de tal forma complexa, que 15 anos depois da independência, ainda é pertinente e motivo de discussão a cor da pele de quem escreve" (Rosário 8). This situation is of great significance. It is particularly important in the case of Couto, both because the writer is white and because he is proposing an ideologically directed construction of an alternative national identity paradigm. Couto answers these questions through his work,



mapping a way for the minority populations to be integrated in this new paradigm.

To solve the question of the participation of whites and Indians, Couto writes the heterogenic identity of the multiculturalism of his nation into the paradigm of identity, giving voice diverse social strata, but without challenging the national unity. In fact he does just the opposite, strengthening it by making it more inclusive and flexible. This multiculturalism that Couto stitches into a patchwork-quilt of identities includes the several racial groups that live in the country. In an interview with António Lojas Neves, Couto states that "em Moçambique está-se a lutar pela moçambicanidade e não pela Negritude" (Couto, África 21). Couto positions the paradigm of Mozambican identity beyond the traditional axiom that forces the African entity to state its blackness. Couto's positioning places Mozambicanity above dangerous nationalist discourses contaminated by concepts of nation-state as mono-cultural or mono-racial that are feed by myths of nation as a homogenous and enclosed population that propagates its genetic heritage. For Couto, these nationalistic discourses are present in everyday life in Mozambique:

- Esse monhé, cabrão, ainda lhe lixam antes de eu

sacar vantagem do meu negócio...  
Quis entender melhor o que dizia. Ele se esticou na cadeira e me lembrou da oficial política do governo. Não havia racismo, nenhuma discriminação. Até ministros indianos havia. Contudo, havia aqueles que estavam descontentes. Queriam fechar porta aos asiáticos, autorizar os acessos do comércio apenas aos negros. Assane desfiou politiquices, deixei de lhe escutar. Surendra já me havia falado desse perigo. Pagaria por todos de sua raça, pelos erros e pela ambição dos outros indianos. Seria preciso esperar séculos para que cada homem fosse visto sem o peso da sua raça. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 124)

These traditional axioms are at the root of the most horrendous acts of violence and genocide in other parts of Africa, even when racial minorities are not present, but where ethnic groups fight for power. The obvious conclusion is that, because of African diversity, those traditional axioms have failed.

Mozambicanity is different from fighting for Negritude. The latter was a literary, social and political movement from the 1930s that believed in a common black heritage, shared by black Africans and blacks in Diaspora, and it was used to fight against the political and intellectual hegemony of domination of colonial racism. The historical significance of this movement was the promotion of a literary representation of a single black identity, which involved several spaces that differed in life experiences but that were in many ways united in purpose.

Couto's work deals with ideas of belonging from a different racial perspective, in some instances in direct opposition to the ideas of Negritude. Couto's work challenges the historical racial connotation that Africa carries, the "dark continent", "black Africa", or the notion that "Subsaharan Africa is often identified as Black Africa, and Black Africa belongs to Black Africans" (Anise 28). The conception of Mozambican (or African) ontology through mono-racial parameters is just another hegemonic aspect of the Western historical approach to Africa that perpetuates its classical anthropological reduction to binary oppositional frameworks that construct Africa and African identities as the opposite to Europe and European identities, or blackness as the antithesis of whiteness. "This has given rise to the problem that no definition of Africa can be purified of its racial implications" (Anise 28). The sinister aspect of this binarism is that it does not attach much significance to difference and acknowledges an assumption of homogeneity in both blackness and whiteness that does not exist. This reduces the articulation of identity to race and is, therefore, a racialized and racist construction that fails to realize that what conveys identity is a variety of articulations, of which race is a part but not necessarily the dominate articulation.

Couto's texts are the expression of an imaginary of articulations that is still being negotiated by all Mozambicans. Couto makes it clear in this statement that this is not only his creation, he is writing tensions and anxieties that are already at the center of this process:

Sendo um país que não tem identidade fixa, ele está a inventar o seu próprio retrato. Esta invenção do retrato exige a invenção de uma linguagem. E não só. De estilos, de narrativa. Que narrativa nos serve para contar aquele país que não é contável? Não é contável porque não existe, é feito destes projetos pequenos que nós vamos somando. E nesse aspecto acho que sou eu que apanho boleia. (Seabra 32)

Couto recognizes that large segments of the Mozambican population have never had a participatory action in the political decision making process. Even during the Socialist governments, and especially during those governments, the discursive interactions between the non-Westernized populations and the government was governed by protocols and rules that in effect silenced these populations and served as markers of inequality. The paradoxical aspect of this outcome is that it was done through the political guidance of socialist theories that advocate a society characterized by equality and that Che Guevara characterized as:

Socialism cannot exist without a change in consciousness resulting in a new fraternal attitude toward humanity, both at an individual level, within the societies where socialism is being built or has been built, and on a world scale, with regard to all peoples suffering from imperialist oppression. (Che Guevara 1965)

Couto "*apanha boleia*" by bringing to the public sphere all social segments that were silenced. He creates the opportunity for them to inscribe themselves and complete the national identity paradigm. In that context, the ideological construction of a Mozambican identity poses a problem of belonging for the white and Indian populations who have been native to Mozambique for generations, but are in this instance caught in an ideological dichotomy of belonging to two differentiated worlds. "All early historical accounts of Africa leave the distinct impression that the continent is largely inhabited by Negroes. In contemporary terminology it means that Africa belongs to the Black race" (Anise 28). This is why the minority populations face a major existential challenge: the demand by history that they define themselves. Any criteria to constitute Mozambican identity that essentializes it around notions of blackness and ethno-cultural insularity will construct the white and Indian populations as (racial) outsiders in Mozambique. Identifying Mozambicans as black implies that Mozambicans share

characteristics which bond them as an ethnic group even when this is not the reality. Such a racial construction also makes non-black Mozambicans invisible or strips them of their legitimate claim to Mozambican identity. Couto writes how this conception gives rise to the construction of the "other" as something dangerous and threatening to the majority's survival and "purity". We have an example in the thoughts of the young black man Kindzu when he describes how his family perceives his relationship with an Indian man, Surendra, and with a white man, Pastor Afonso, his school teacher:

Mal saía da escola eu me apressava para sua loja. Entrava ali como se penetrasse numa outra vida. Da maneira que meu mundinho era pequeno eu não imaginava outras viagens que não fossem aquelas visitas desobedecidas. Perdia as horas no estabelecimento, sentado entre mercadorias enquanto as compridas mãos de Surendra corriam leves pelos panos. Era o indiano que me punha o pé na estrada, me avisando da demora. Surendra sabia que minha gente não perdoava aquela convivência. Mas ele não podia compreender a razão. Problema não era ele nem a raça dele. Problema era eu. Minha família receava que eu me afastasse de meu mundo original. Tinham seus motivos. Primeiro, era a escola. Ou antes: minha amizade com meu mestre, o pastor Afonso. Suas lições continuavam mesmo depois da escola. Com ele aprendia outros saberes, feitiçarias dos brancos como chamava meu pai. Com ele ganhara esta paixão das letras, escrevinhador de papéis como se neles pudessem despertar os tais feitiços que falava o velho Taímo. Mas esse era um mal até desejado. Falar bem, escrever muito bem e, sobretudo, contar ainda melhor. Eu devia receber esses expedientes para um bom futuro. Pior, era Surendra Valá. Com o indiano minha alma arriscava se mulatar, em mestiçagem de

baixa qualidade. Era verdadeiro, esse risco. Muitas vezes eu me deixava misturar nos sentimentos de Surendra, aprendiz de um novo coração. Acontecia no morrer das tardes quando, sentados na varanda, ficávamos olhando as réstias do poente reflectidas nas águas do Índico. (Couto, Terra Sonâmbula 16)

Couto's work is a clear path towards overcoming the racial implications of Mozambican identity that, as this quote shows, leave the white and Indian population in an ambiguous space of "unbelonging." In Couto, genealogical notions of identity give place to multicultural notions of identity that fundamentally challenge the historical attempt of the government to perpetuate the hegemony of a uniform Mozambican identity and belonging. The intersections of identity and self-identification among Mozambicans and the multicultural processes native to the country engender plural identities in Couto's work in the sense that it is the complexity and the racial and ethno-cultural multidimensionality that defines Mozambicanity. Couto expresses this plurality by playing with the language:

Eu somos tristes. Não me engano, digo bem. Ou talvez: nós sou triste? Porque dentro de mim, não sou sozinho. Sou muitos. E esses todos disputam minha única vida. Vamos tendo nossas mortes. Mas parto foi só um. Aí, o problema. Por isso, quando conto a minha história me misturo, mulato não de raças, mas de existências. (Mia Couto, Vozes anoitecidas 85)

Couto recognizes that the national identity of his country has to be a more flexible ideological frame than Negritude to be able to accommodate the diversity found in Mozambique. Individuals hold a multiple of identities that often serve as grounds for association. In most cases, individuals sustain a primordial notion of identity based on genealogical ties, while in practical life they maintain a contextual awareness of identification that can be either political, gendered, religious or regional.

His recognition and mapping of Mozambican identity is developed within an ideological frame that places identity above the racial and cultural constraints that traditionally infuse national identities. For Couto, in a multicultural country like Mozambique, in which the contemporary populations result from a fundamental movement of peoples that joined the original populations - from large Bantu migrations from the north, migrations from the Arabic peninsula, and European and Indian migrations during the colonial rule, a national identity has to be a flexible paradigm that answers to the racial, linguistic, ethnical, and cultural mosaic that we find in the country today. Iris Teichmann considers the concept of multiculturalism in A Multicultural World:



A multicultural society is one in which people from different cultures live together. Cultural diversity tends to be promoted and celebrated in these societies, but there are still considerable differences in the way people from different racial and cultural backgrounds are treated, especially if they are in a minority. (Teichmann 8)

Couto writes a multicultural country from an egalitarian perspective. He aims at recognizing the different cultures or cultural identities within the country while at the same time promoting social cohesion. This conception comes from a liberal tradition of egalitarian multiculturalism, in opposition to the stratified multiculturalism that we saw in previous chapters. Couto's work is an arena of public discourse, it is the public sphere where the subaltern voices of reason are heard. I am using the term public sphere in the sense that Habermas defined. Craig Calhoun characterizes it in this way:

In a nutshell, a public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends upon both quality of discourse and quantity of participation. Habermas develops the first requirement in elaborating how the classical bourgeois public sphere of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was constituted around rational critical argument, in which the merits of arguments and not the identities of arguers were crucial. (Calhoun 2)

Couto's work is a stage in modern Mozambique in which political participation is enacted through the medium of

literature, particularly his weekly chronicles published in local newspapers. In these chronicles, the characters, and at times the narrative voice, deliberate about common affairs. The chronicles become an institutionalized space of discursive interaction mediated by the author.

In the case of the national narrative paradigm, contrary to the governmental paradigm, Couto does not write the emancipation but rather the liberation of the national identity paradigm. Emancipation of the national paradigm from European reductionisms and binarisms implies a political attempt to try to be free within an ideological frame, or to articulate oneself in the Western model, preoccupied with attaining equality in order to be like "the rest of the world." Couto writes the liberation of the paradigm, so that true freedom can be attained when Western constraints on the model of national identity are entirely removed. Mozambicans can then be liberated to become themselves, free from a Western framework in which they are striving to attain a Western conception of freedom and equality.

The ultimate objective of the national identity paradigm proposed by Couto is the liberation and not mere emancipation since what Mozambicans truly desire is the freedom to become themselves, removed entirely from the Western model of identity.

It is clear that contemporary Mozambique is the result of several historical encounters in which the confrontations, some more violent than others, between different cultural and ethnic groups produced the multicultural community we find today. This means that there is not one single all inclusive articulation of Mozambicanity. Yet, if we consider the frequent questioning that literary critics make of the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the Mozambican writers, we can only conclude that the multicultural context of Mozambique does not seem to be fully engaged by all participants in the construction of the national narrative, and that the monolithical idea of one people-one nation-one state-one country is still a powerfully hegemonic force of domination. To overcome this, not only the minority groups need to make a statement of Mozambicanity, but they must also be recognized as such by everyone else. Couto writes the interaction between an Indian, Surendra, that has decided to leave his store and his town and is saying goodbye to a client Kindzu, a black young man, while Antoninho, another young black man that works for him, observes and hears the conversation:

Eu não queria entender o lojeiro. Porque suas palavras matavam a miragem de um oceano que nos unira no passado. Afinal, Surendra estava sozinho, sem laço com vizinhas gentes, sem raiz na terra. Não tinha ninguém de quem despedir. Só eu. Ainda

insisti, subitamente pequenito, entregando ideias que meu peito não autenticava. Que aquela terra também era a dele, que todos cabiam nela. Só no falar senti o sabor salgado da água dos olhos: eu chorava, o medo me afogava a voz.  
- Que pátria, Kindzu? Eu não tenho lugar nenhum. Ter pátria é assim como você está fazer agora, saber que vale a pena chorar.  
Antoninho, o ajudante, escutava com absurdez. Para ele eu era um traidor da raça, negro fugido das tradições africanas. Passou por entre nós dois, desdelicado provocador, só para mostrar seus desdêns. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 19)

Through the voice of Surendra, Couto expresses the pathway to Mozambicanity for the minorities. To have a homeland is to know "que vale a pena chorar" for it. Couto's literature is a space where the fragmentary local comes together to build the national identity from a standpoint of diversity. Couto is a man of Portuguese descent. The ideological frame from which his work is produced is a construction that negotiates inclusion and clearly creates the space to integrate him, and the perceived non-native white and Indian communities, into the national narrative of Mozambique. When Couto is questioned about his race and Portuguese descent, he always answers that a part of him is European and another is African, because he grew up with the local communities and assimilated to local culture. He stresses that race is not an endorsement for inclusiveness or representation in a multicultural and multiracial country.

The participation of the white and Indian communities in Mozambicanity has restrictions. As communities in between places, deterritorialized, they have to demonstrate a weakening of ties between culture and place, and show a reterritorialization in Mozambican terms. For the minority populations, belonging is achieved through processes of transculturation. Among other things, there has to be a change in the way of thinking, acting, and meaning that is recognized by the local, that affects the cultural and identitary fabric of the individuals belonging to these racialized communities. In this process, the communities are anchored in Mozambique and they gain a local meaning on the identity map.

Transculturation is a concept developed in the 1940s by the Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz. The author explained his concept of "transculturation" as follows:

I understand that transculturation better captures the different stages of the transition from one culture to another because such a process is not simply the acquisition of a culture different from one's own (which is what acculturation suggests); it also implies the loss of or uprooting from a previous culture. In other words, the process implies a partial disacculturation and, at the same time, the creation of new phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. Briefly, and as Malinowski's school has made clear, every cultural contact is like a genetic coupling between individuals: the newborn shares the features of his or her parents while being different from both. Thus the process is one of transculturation, and this notion embraces

all the different facets of the analogy. Questions of sociological lexicons are very important to a better understanding of social phenomena, particularly in Cuba, whose history, unlike that of any other place in America, is one of intense, complex, and endless transculturation of numerous human masses, all of them in constant transitional process. (Ortiz 96-7)

People have a natural tendency to resolve conflicts over time, rather than exacerbating them. Conflict arises when societies encroach upon one another's territory. When an immediate solution cannot be found in this process of co-existence, conflicts lead to contact between individuals that in time leads to some degree of resolution. Ortiz problematizes that attempts to keep a cultural identity "pure" are an artificiality that fails to recognize the realities of social change. Cultures are/were never "pure" and are destined to change. It is because individuals are immersed in their cultural subjectivities at all times that they cannot see that their culture in fact changes fundamentally over time.

Transculturalism from below decenters local resistances of ethnic nationalism. It creates the space for new liberator practices. One sign of this convergence is the tendency to conceive transculturalism as something to celebrate, as an expression of a subversive popular resistance.

Cultural plurality, multi-positional identities, border-crossing by marginal "others," and transnational practices are

depicted as conscious and successful efforts by ordinary people to escape control and domination "from above" by the state. Couto celebrates the liberatory character of transcultural practices often representing it as engaged in a dialectic of opposition and resistance to the hegemonic logic of racially essentialized paradigms of national identity.

The participation of the white and Indian population in Mozambicanity is contingent on how far along they are in the process of transculturation and reterritorialization. In Couto's work this is a process that started during the colonization of Mozambique. Not everyone is part of this process. All the Portuguese that Couto portrays as living a recreated imperial Europe in Mozambique, or as guardians of European Imperialism, maintaining an unquestioned linkage to the colonial metropolis, are always outsiders, foreigners and invaders, and they either leave the country, disappear in mysterious circumstances, or die of violent deaths. In all cases, they are extricated from Mozambique as if surgically removed.

The Indian characters go through the same split, although there is an added tension to their positioning in the colonial order. Some of them started the transculturation process; others live reminiscing about their homeland, Goa, in the West coast of India, manifesting their inability to embrace the

present or the future. Yet others, like in the short story "De como se vazou a vida de Ascolino do Perpétuo Socorro" in Vozes anoitecidas declare themselves "Indo-português sou, católico de fé e costume" (Couto, Vozes anoitecidas 67). Ascolino dresses in the most formal way, evocative of his superior position in the colonial order, sings Fado and "Costurava no discurso os rendilhados lusitanos da sua admiração" (Couto, Vozes anoitecidas 67). Everyday at 5 o'clock his faithful servant takes him on a bicycle to the local bar. This bar mimics the colonial human landscape outside: whites enter through the front door and blacks through the back door. Ascolino, in all his *lusitanidade*, enters through the front door to the world of the settlers to which he makes all attempts to belong but that does not recognize or accept him. This particular day, the soldiers on another table comment out loud about the annexation of Goa by the Indian Union to provoke him:

- Goa, lá se foi. Sacanas de monhés, raça maldita! Mas o Ascolino, para espanto, não regista ofensa. Antes se junta aos ofensores.  
- Monhés, sacanas sim senhor. Aliás, porém, indo-português qui sou, combatente dos inimigos di Pátria lusitane.  
Os soldados entreolham-se, desconfiados. Mas o Ascolino leva mais alto a afirmação da lusitanidade. Subindo à cadeira, oscilante, discursiva heroísmos sonhados. Uma cruzada, sim, uma cruzada para



recuperar o nome de Goa para uso português. (Couto, Vozes anoitecidas 74)

Trapped in an identity product of his own fantasy, he discards the Mozambican and Indian in him, living instead in the imaginary realm of colonial order. The soldiers take his speech as a mockery and Ascolino breaks down accidentally dropping some of his whiskey on one of the soldiers that punches him. Ascolino leaves and his world of categorizations and formal but not effective belonging is shattered. On the way home, Ascolino is in a whiskey daze and he mistakes his servant for his wife, "changing man into women and signaling the collapse of the categorized worlds to which they subscribed" (Rothwell 148).

Couto portrays Ascolino, and all other characters like him, at the end of the line with nowhere to go. Their feelings of "unbelonging" are not the result of local exclusion suggesting a state of being acted upon, but more from the feeling of being out of place. Although deterritorialization gives them the possibility to reinvent themselves through transculturation, they do not do it towards the local, they do not strive to bring culture and place together, but rather strive for bettering their positioning in the macro context of the imperial colonial endeavor. They will never belong to the white world of Colonial settlers and at the same time these

characters are constituted outside the frame provided by the new paradigm of Mozambican identity.

The path towards a participatory presence of the minorities in the new paradigm of national identity, proposed by Couto for Mozambique, starts during the colonial period. The process of deterritorialization of whites and Indian to Mozambique broke the link between culture and the local contexts of its creation disrupting traditional structures of expression. In Contos do nascer da terra Couto offers several examples of the beginning of a successful process of transculturation. In "Falas do velho tuga" an old Portuguese man that has made the transition to the national period, talks to someone about his life. He says "eu quero a paz de pertencer a um só lugar, a tranquilidade de não dividir memórias. Ser todo de uma vida. E assim ter a certeza que morro de uma só única vez" (Couto, Contos do nascer da terra 108). He describes to his interlocutor how Africa became a part of him, first in a very corporeal way, connecting the human body to the space:

África: comecei a vê-la através da febre. Foi há muitos anos, num hospital da pequena vila, mal eu tinha chegado. Eu era já um funcionário de carreira, homem feito e preenchido. Estava preparado para os ossos do ofício mas não estava habilitado às

intempéries do clima. Os acessos da malária me sacudiam na cama do hospital apenas uma semana após ter desembarcado. As tremuras me faziam estranho efeito: eu me separava de mim como duas placas que se descolam à força de serem abanadas. (Couto, Contos do nascer da terra 108)

Through this infestation of his body by a local disease, Africa is being inscribed in his body, reterritorializing a conception of locality creating an intimate connection between physical placement and the human body, inscribing in a corporeal way the local. The man continues by describing how a progressive movement of naturalization was initiated by this occurrence:

Em minha cabeça, se formaram duas memórias. Uma, mais antiga, se passeava na obscura zona, olhando os mortos, suas faces frias. A outra parte era nascente, reluzcente, em estréia de mim. Graças à mais antiga das doenças, em dia que não sei precisar, tremando de suores, eu dava à luz um outro ser, nascido de mim. (Contos do nascer da terra 108)

He has entered the complex threads of transculturation that eventually lead to the creation of a new negotiated identity. This process is cemented by his relationship to a black nurse, Custódia, the woman that he is going to spend the rest of his life with. He was in the hospital sick with malaria when they met. She told him:

- Eu tenho um remédio, disse Custódia. É um medicamento que usamos na nossa raça. O Senhor Fernandes quer ser tratado dessa maneira?
- Quero.
- Então, hoje de noite lhe venho buscar. (Couto, Contos do nascer da terra 109)

The description of how he goes through the African ritual to cure his disease is the epitome of the transculturation change that he goes through. There is a connection with something ancient and powerful that he goes through and for the first time he sees new things when looking out the window and he learns new meaning for this land that surrounds him. This is the construction and reworking of a paradigm of identity tracing continuities and discontinuities between, in a space of cultural pluralism.

This old Portuguese man is in what the Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago called *entre-lugar* when he questioned the categories of "source" and "influence". Santiago conceives *entre-lugar* as a strategic reading and response to the colonizer's thought. This is not a place of permanence, but an interpretative effort of the colonized to resist the imposition of the colonizer's beliefs and a strategic possibility that allows for incompatible realities to come together in a transforming discursive dynamic. He defines it in the following terms:

Entre o sacrifício e o jogo, entre a prisão e a transgressão, entre a submissão ao código e a agressão, entre a obediência e a rebelião, entre a assimilação e a expressão, – ali, nesse lugar aparentemente vazio, seu tempo e seu lugar de clandestinidade, ali, se realiza o ritual antropófago da literatura latino-americana. (Santiago 28)

I believe that the colonizer also produces a strategic response to the colonized thought that leaves the colonizer in a *entre-lugar* where he engages the colonized in a discursive dynamic. It is in this *entre-lugar*, where boundaries are blurred and challenged, that Couto presses political and social concerns from a very personal level. The *entre-lugar* is the space of articulation of paradigms that require a broadening of social and political concepts, like identity. The *entre-lugar* recognizes and immediately questions the ideological center of essentialized identities.

All naturalized references come under suspicion, which allow for transgression and displacement or decentering, which empowers new discursive interpretations of identity and permits the re-inscribing of peripheral identities in the ever changing center. In Terra sonâmbula, Dona Virgina Pinto is a Portuguese woman that is already in that space:

A portuguesa se vai deixando em tristonhas vagasões.  
Branca de nacionalidade, não de raça. O português é  
sua língua materna e o makwa, sua maternal

linguagem. Ela, bidiomática. Os meninos negros lhe redondam a existência, se empoleirando, barulhosos, no muro. Ela nem zanga. E me contam assim: que Dona Virgínia amealha fantasias, cada vez mais se infanciando. Suas únicas visitas são essas crianças que, desde a mais tenra manhã, enchem o som de muitas cores. Os pais dos meninos aplicam bondades na velha, trazem-lhe comida, bons cumprimentos. A vida finge, a velha faz conta. No final, as duas se escapam, fugidias, ela e a vida. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 170)

With the story of Dona Virgínia, Couto reveals that more is needed than a renegotiated construction of identity, to make transcultural subjects culturally palatable identities to the Mozambican paradigm. For the inclusion to be successful there has to be a fundamental recognition of the *entre-lugar* or the transcultural subject as part of it, even if the specifications remain contested.

The tension between recognition and exclusion, embodied in identity-based struggles for representation and cultural inclusion, is the centerpiece of Couto's paradigm. We can see this when Kindzu talks about how his family and Antoninho regard the Indian Surendra Valá in:

O ajudante da loja, Antoninho, me olhava com os maus fígados. Era um rapaz negro, de pele escura, agordalhado. Muitas vezes me mentia, à porta, dizendo que o patrão se tinha ausentado. Parecia invejar-se de meu recebimento entre os indianos. Minha família também não queria que eu pisasse na loja. Esse gajo é um monhé, diziam como se eu não tivesse reparado. E acrescentavam:

- Um monhé não conhece amigo preto. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 24)

Surendra has gone through the same process of transculturation that Dona Virginia went through, but he is not recognized as such. Couto writes him in such a way that we cannot but think that this last step in occupying the *entre-lugar* is largely arbitrary. The perspective Couto defends is the exclusion of consideration of race and calls for social inclusion and group recognition of the reterritorialized subjects. The politics of recognition for his paradigm focuses on cultural acceptance conceived as the bridge between individuals and a true politics of difference. Through transculturation individuals become local as they reterritorialize, and are included in the multicultural landscape of Mozambique.

For the Mozambican born generations the process of transculturation is almost complete. Even when the parents resist, Couto writes the inevitability of the process:

Contrataram a negra Marcelina para cuidados do único filho. A patroa, Dona Clementina, se acometia de maternas invejas: a criança se calava apenas no colo de Marcelina. Se encostava na imensa redondez da ama e sossegava a pontos de feto. [...] Não encontravam graça que África entrasse assim na intimidade do lar. Com o tempo, uma certeza se foi fundando: o bebé escapava à biológica maternidade. (Couto, Naberma de nenhuma estrada 55)

This exposes the multitude of interactive cultural practices at the core of the transculturation process that form a significant challenge to mono-cultural nation-state discourse. In this case, belonging to a nation by birthplace is not the strongest articulation for identification. These children live in between two cultures, immersed in the local cultures and successfully negotiating cultural belonging. Couto writes how identities are defined according to multiple interactive cultural practices in family, in local, regional community, or state-wide contexts. These children grow up to negotiate and interpret social relations for their own social and political purposes, forming hybrid identities that can then be incorporated in the new identity paradigm. Minorities, then, develop diverse identity references, expressing themselves in new identity spaces while maintaining links with their culture of origin, like we saw in the case of Surendra.

The negotiated identities of the minorities require a sense of embeddedness and belonging within a society that shapes their identity and their sense of place in the majority culture. This promotes social integration and self-identification with the local space, effectively integrating them in the new national narrative and identity paradigm. Nonetheless, Couto writes them in continuous change,



incorporating diverse cultural ways of life to form dynamic new ones. Rather than writing people with clear national identities, Couto uncovers how through transculturation minorities put together different aspects of varying cultures to form their own sense of identity and belonging.

On both individual and social levels, each transcultural supra-racial and trans-ethnic identity has a different reterritorialization, and the differences between groups indicate that trans-ethnic identities take different forms according to the social and cultural characteristics and the history of the specific groups. In other words, the integration of the different cultural segments of Mozambican society into a single identitary paradigm does not mean that convergence to a general culture is equal to a convergence in ethnic / racial identities. This is evident in the social situations written by Couto in which people separate into groups, even if belonging to an identical supra-ethnicity, like nationality.

Ortiz's transculturation takes in to consideration the complexity of the process of cultural convergence, which he calls ethnoconvergence, although other authors use terms like assimilation, homogenization, and acculturation, to refer to the same phenomena. These later terms are not adequate to

refer to the africanization of racial minorities in Mozambique because they underline the destruction of one culture by another. In Couto's work we find several cultural identities in constant movement, negotiating their place constantly and acquiring a sense of self through the construction of cultural others in the multicultural context of Mozambique. Above all, the complex process that modifies all of the cultures in contact emphasizes new cultural phenomena being created.

Ortiz then identifies convergence as an inscription of culture outside of cultural difference and a simultaneous absence of closure, meaning that it is a never ending process, a convergence that demonstrates that multicultural identity can be forged in Mozambique, even if in a permanent state of ongoing negotiation of the meaning of culture. Fernando Ortiz identifies several phases of the process of transculturation "la hostil, la transigente, la adaptativa y la reivindicadora, que es la de hoy; al futuro corresponderá la fase integrativa" (Godoy 242).

When considering the multicultural and multiracial context of Cuba, Ortiz describes the idea of a fifth phase of integration. This is most definitely an ideal shared by the national identity paradigm that Couto writes:

This is tomorrow's phase, the last phase, where

cultures fuse and conflict ceases, giving way to a *tertium quid*, a third entity and culture and to a new society culturally integrated, where mere racial factors have lost their dissociating power. For this reason, this occasion, which brings together a group of Cubans of different races, who are seeking the bases of mutual understanding as a means of achieving national integration, constitutes a new turn in the history of our country and should be so interpreted. (Ortiz 24)

Just like Ortiz, Couto focuses on the importance of creating frameworks that incorporate mutually acceptable patterns of divergence and convergence to accommodate cultural diversity and ultimately resolve conflicts. Couto's characters yearn for this fifth phase of integration. One example is again Surendra:

Surendra disse, então:  
- Não gosto de pretos, Kindzu.  
- Como? Então gosta de quem? Dos brancos?  
- Também não.  
- Já sei: gosta de indianos, gosta da sua raça.  
- Não. Eu gosto de homens que não tem raça. É por isso que eu gosto de si, Kindzu. Abandonei a loja sombreado pela angústia. Eu agora estava órfão da família e da amizade. Sem família o que somos? Menos que poeira de um grão. Sem família, sem amigos: o que me restava fazer? A única saída era sozinhar-me, por minha conta, antes que me empurrassem para esse fogo que, lá fora, consumia tudo. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 19)

This cultural convergence does not mean that Couto refutes the existence of race. In the fifth phase of cultural integration, it is simply regarded as an arbitrary sign used

by social constructionism to divide human beings, but that is culturally an empty category and holds no value. Couto writes the question of race in ethnography, tentatively identifying an emergent post-race paradigm for Mozambique:

E era como se naquele imenso mar se desenrolassem os fios da história, romances antigos onde nossos sangues se haviam misturado. Eis a razão por que demorávamos na adoração do mar: estavam ali nossos comuns antepassados, flutuando sem fronteiras. Essa era a raiz daquela paixão de me encasear no estabelecimento de Surendra Valá.

- Somos da igual raça, Kindzu: somos índicos!  
(Couto, Terra sonâmbula 17)

All social human beings interact and are interdependent on other individuals. We exist in the other's perception of us, and the notion of the other demonstrates that social life is constituted by difference. Couto writes the inclusion of this difference in the sky of Mozambique, as an ordinary occurrence in the local natural world of the country:

Olhando as alturas, Muidinga repara nas várias raças das nuvens. Brancas, mulatas, negras. E a variedade dos sexos também nelas se encontrava. A nuvem feminina, suave: a nua-vem, nua-vai. A nuvem-macho, arrulhando com peito de pombo, em feliz ilusão de imortalidade. (Couto, Terra sonâmbula 121)

Couto's work is then the recognition that we are all culturally interconnected in a complex systems of relationship

that are much bigger than race or any other single identitary articulation. In this multicultural context, identity and belonging basically arise from a continuous process of cultural negotiation which leads to the acquisition of some and the rejection of other elements, in a complex construct that is never entirely definitive.

Couto's work includes many voices in order to perform this cultural process. If excessive prominence were given to his voice it would create a type of totalitarianism, the single and subjugating voice of the author telling Mozambicans who and what to be. At this point in time, Couto echoes the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty:

[Contesting the modern is] to write over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship other narratives of human connections that draw sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities of citizenship are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor by the nightmare of "tradition" that "modernity" creates. (Chakrabarty 23)

This is a self serving strategy on the part of Couto, he himself belonging to one minority. It is natural that he strives for a national identity paradigm that can include him as part of this nation he must feel that he helped to build. If race is the major factor that makes people not recognizes

him as a Mozambican it is then natural that he undermines the role of race in the determination of national identity. In the poem entitled "Identidade" Couto writes:

Preciso ser um outro / para ser eu mesmo / Sou grão de rocha / Sou o vento que a desgasta / Sou polén sem insecto / Sou areia sustentando / o sexo das árvores / Existo onde me desconheço / aguardando pelo meu passado / ansiando a esperança do futuro / No mundo que combato / morro / no mundo por que luto / nasço. (Raiz de Orvalho e Outros Poemas 20)

In a paradigm dominated by race, Couto dies as a Mozambican, he ceases to exist; in the world that he fights for, free from the subordination to race, he is born as a Mozambican.

Couto's work is transformational politics because it uses the power of the written word, of literature and ideology, to create change, to develop people and to build communities. It is a participatory construction that gives priority to the ideological silenced disadvantage social segments that are excluded by a Westernized paradigm of identity and creates a new paradigm that is more inclusive and recognizes diversity. The by-product of this work is the liberation from racialized constraints and the inclusion of the racial minorities in the national identity paradigm. Finally, it also seeks social and political equality between different social segments and

ultimately builds a society that makes every effort to be just and humane.

## Conclusion

Couto's work is a needed constructive effort to project an alternative model of Mozambican identity. Couto's literature is a site of reconciliation between the old and the new. He updates the old and reforms the new.

Couto's discourse is a political engagement of his own nation. The paradox of marginalization and empowerment seem to coexist in the ideas of representation and resistance. Couto's literature, language, and narrative style enable him to voice the emotions, frustrations, and the triumphs of Mozambican peoples. His texts serve to represent the local lifestyle and resistance to neo-colonial acts of authority and oppression. Couto preserves cultural sites within which collective memory, identity and action are integrated, and which produce representation of marginalized discourses.

Couto's work is a counter-narrative to the official narrative, a critique of the literary cannon and of the exclusion of the local narratives. His work challenges the "common sense" definition of what it means to be Mozambican. He problematizes how the definition promoted by the government



is informed by Western concepts of modernization and progress, and asserts that ultimately it is insufficient and lacks confirmation. His writing is an alert that identity is a complex set of relations informed by power and privilege, historical context, language and geography and that people live in those intersections at all times. Identity is a powerful tool for survival, but it is also fragile: a never-ending re-negotiation of the center that resists simplification and unity, and it is easily lost because it exists only in our minds. Identity consists of a repertoire that is heterogeneous in content and function. People can deviate from what the government presents as normal and still participate in the national grand narrative.

The titles of Couto's books are little fragments of this ideological quest that guides his work. His recovery of the traditional cultures brought forth by Contos do nascer da terra that were brutally undermined and repressed in Terra sonâmbula, when the masses had no way to express themselves to power when they had only Vozes anoitecidas. Couto responds with Estórias abensonhadas that fight to give voice to the unspoken and to recover the subordinate. For Couto the time has come, it is ripe for this new inclusive paradigm of identity where Um rio chamado tempo, uma casa chamada terra

come together to make space for it, a time and place for a unique new era in which Cada homem é uma raça.

As we have seen through this study, Couto's work is the recognition that, even in such a planned socialist state, people are obstructed from participating and collective decision making mask domination. The effort to legitimize the government and create a single, cohesive national identity with a single, hegemonic, wide-ranging public has disenfranchised groups perceived as oppositional. Not giving them a voice creates tension between the project to socialize the country, which implies participatory parity for all groups, and the resistance against accommodating contestation among a diversity of competing groups.

In search of legitimacy, the government has promoted nationalism as a framework to solve the country's problems revolving around progress and modernization, in which traditional values were eclipsed and national symbols were forged. This sort of developmental nationalism critiqued both traditional and colonial political, economic, social, and cultural order. This process, inspired in socialist thought, involved changes of political, economic, social, and cultural institutions. Couto's work brings forward a new awareness or consciousness among the traditional sectors of society that are alienated by these changes. He mediates between society

and the state by holding the state accountable to society via publicity. He makes information about how the state functions accessible so that the state activities can be subject to critical scrutiny.

The government has differentially empowered certain groups, which has effectively privileged norms of one cultural group, making discursive assimilation a condition for participation in the political decision making process, resulting in the annihilation of multiculturalism. Socialism did not guarantee social and political equality.

The same is true for Couto, whose work is itself deployed as a strategy of distinction. In Couto's literature there is an empowering of particular subject positions and identities in a literary site or space. His texts act as representatives of the nation's peoples and serve as a symbol of resistance against several forms of oppression. Couto's depiction of the life of an independent nation speaks out against the oppression of its former colonizers and current rulers and expresses a desire for the incorporation of values of an idealized pre-colonial society. It is done at the author's discretion and is framed by his ideology. Couto's work is a public space built to give access to certain voices, that he perceives as oppressed, while excluding others, that he

perceives as being the oppressors, with whom he does not agree.

Couto's counter-discursive strategies engage all neo-colonial discourses that he identifies as prevalent in his nation's identity and historical narratives. The author also reminds us that the revolutionary experience in Mozambique had unexpected destructive consequences. It is fundamental to disregard the revolution as the sole source of identity and remove it from the center of the cultural and historical narrative. This will allow identity to reconnect to the historical continuum that was so brutally interrupted.

Couto is highly critical of the governmental project that he characterizes as a product of deculturalization or mental colonization. His literature is a Mozambican-centered work that lays the path for liberatory practices and intellectual disobedience. Although this is a demanding process that cannot be achieved by simply reading his books, his work is provocative reading material critical to start a discussion and reflection about the recovery and reconnection to traditional social practices and philosophical beliefs rooted in the traditional wisdom of Mozambican peoples as a means of ending dominance. In Africa, deculturalization refers to the colonial method of intellectual control by the systematic elimination of the African subject's ancestral culture and

then brutal infusion of European culture. It is an extremely effective process of psychological and spiritual abuse supported by the Portuguese-speaking educational system and the media.

Couto fights the project that rejects Mozambican heritage and culture, African philosophical and religious ideas, practices, beliefs and customs to more easily manipulate and control Mozambicans, akin to intellectual colonialism. In a self-imposed conceptual incarceration, they identify with Western history and culture and are uninterested in Mozambican history, traditions and culture. This elite formed by former and new *assimilados* was produced by the destructive effects of Western education that excludes, misrepresents or underestimates the role of African people and the significance of their contributions to humanity.

Couto fights against this learned indifference, a product of the frustration created by a non-participatory imparity in the decision making process, which results in a destructive disinterest and lack of support for the political and economic liberation of Mozambican people. His work is an act of intellectual disobedience that resists the hegemonic attempts to restrict and regulate social order through the imposition of Eurocentric worldviews. To achieve this, Couto immerses his texts in traditional cultural values and daily living. The

texts become a space for traditional values, beliefs, orientations and perspectives.

For the elite, Couto's work becomes a journey of self-discovery, culminating in the overthrowing of Eurocentric values and belief systems and a reawakening to local social values, beliefs and customs that enable stable societies by re-Africanizing the Mozambican mind.

Couto writes in Portuguese, but his writing is not a copy of the colonial, but rather a thing in itself that occupies a cultural space on its own. His is a literature that uses the language of the colonizer to speak back at the former ruler, but not from a space of subjugation, rather from a space of the inherent cultural uniqueness of the Mozambican peoples. His texts are a counter-discourse and not a parallel practice. Couto's work frees the Portuguese language of Mozambique from foreign ownership and breaks with the European norm. It denies the colonizer an authorizing and legitimizing presence.

Couto's literature affirms the local culture and shows how the Portuguese language is shaped by the lived experiences of the populations that embody non-western cultural traditions by expressing the traditional systems of belief. The author recovers subjects excluded from the dominant literary narrative. Combined with his textual insubordination against

cultural authority, he interrogates the Portuguese language itself.

There are, however, fundamental colonial constructions that Couto never questions. The most important one is the colonial state borders as a difficult legacy for Mozambique. It is true that all borders are artificial. Many borders around the world separate members of distinct ethnic groups, and in countries with long histories, the modern state is superimposed on archaic political entities. What makes the African case unique is not only the artificiality of its borders but the artificiality of its states. Mozambique's borders, like other African states, were constituted through agreements between European colonial powers, and not through the emergence of strong local leaders and governments that could establish effective control over a certain territory and extract the resources necessary to sustain an independent state.

Mozambique's border requires recognition in socio-political terms where the function of social identification resides. A border is a construction that defines the extent of a territory as a nation and subsequently the particular identity attached to the nation, transforming the many, if not into one, at least into an intricate map of relations of citizenship. This transformation requires a process of

indoctrination that takes place within the nation's borders, naturalizing a national identity. This naturalization is an ideological pacification of difference, to forge unity.

In Mozambique, these borders did not respect old regional states and divided peoples and ethnic groups -- regardless of whether these individuals ever considered themselves as such in pre-colonial days. The old borderlands where cultures blended and clashed, where peoples resisted and embraced the "other," were all thrown into an imposed "colonial-space" during colonial times. These "colonial-spaces" had arbitrary borders negotiated between different colonial rulers. Different groups were united under the same form of oppression. Couto never questions the "colonial-space" Mozambique.

The author challenges oppressive structures produced by colonial rule and preserved by the Mozambican political elite after the emancipation; and he criticizes and exposes the contemporary Mozambican state. However, he never questions matters of space or the legitimacy of the state itself. From his site of contestation Couto is actually performing a service to the Mozambican state. Renegotiating a more flexible identity, he paves the way that allows the state to have a more inclusive narrative. This aims to unify all Mozambicans and guarantee the ideological survival of the country.



In the process, the most enduring differences are eventually eroded and interdependence follows. This is an ongoing, fragile and precarious process, and for the most part unsuccessful. Most African countries acknowledge this precariousness by keeping the language of the formal colonizer in order to maintain the state integrity. Couto does not speak to this issue. This absence is very revealing in relation to the author's ideological frame.

The removal of the revolution from the center of Mozambican national identity, the empowerment of the excluded subjects and of the traditional belief systems, plus the agency of Mozambican subjects over the Portuguese language, are all aspects of the articulation of a new identity paradigm that Couto enunciates for Mozambique.

His work is transformational politics because it frees the national identity paradigm from the racial implications to create change and offer a paradigm that can include a multitude of diverse, at times contradictory, articulations. The by-product of this new paradigm is that it makes space for the inclusion of the racial minorities. I believe that this reflects the author's desire for inclusion and recognition as a Mozambican.

For all these reasons above, Couto's identity paradigm is not a revolutionary proposal but rather a reform. It does not

seek to overturn the social system in favor of a different system. Couto shows how the idealism behind the Mozambican revolution quickly disappeared when the new system was put in place and Couto seeks to repair the parts that cause so much exclusion. The author focuses on the local, on community, on the people that we can actually see. As a reformer, Couto is a healer of the communities. He makes his stand known through his literature and he lives and acts in the way he wishes others to act, and remains present and visible in the community.

Couto might not live to see the result of his work, because it takes time. Reform takes generations to ingrain itself into a society but his fight is worthy because it changes people's minds, not just the system.

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